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Ideas on Liberty

SEPTEMBER 1971

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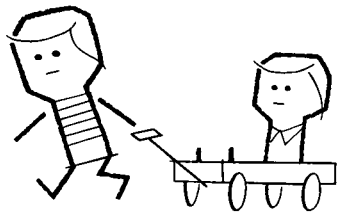
Ownership Responsibility and the Child

GARY NORTH



DEFENDERS of the free enterprise system may be rare, but there are a lot more of them than of those who practice freedom. There are always more entrepreneurs around than free enterprise advocates, but I am not talking about entrepreneurs. I am talking about the depressingly short supply of free enterprise defenders who make micro-economic decisions in terms of a philosophy of open competition on a price-oriented market. The temptation of temporary economic advantage lures capitalist after capitalist into the arms of the statist regulating agencies. The micro-economic decisions at the level of the individual and the firm are the crucial ones, and it is precisely here that the war against statism is being lost.

Yet, if the firm seems to be an area of retreat, the family is a philosophical disaster area. Men and women who are personally committed to the idea of the moral superiority of the voluntary market and private ownership seem incapable of grasping the parental role of imparting their faith to their children. The family is the training ground for children in every sphere of their young lives. Why should the concept of private ownership and personal responsibility be deferred until the child reaches his teens? If the first eight years are the crucial ones in the development of the child's perception of things, the establishment of his habits, the beginning of his intellectual tools, and the

Dr. North recently completed graduate studies at the University of California, Riverside, and currently serves as Director of Seminars at the Foundation for Economic Education.

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channeling of his emotions, then why are these years so ignored by parents as a time of training in the ideas of property?

Is there any concept that a child learns more rapidly than the concept of "mine"? I know virtually nothing of Soviet education at the preschool level, but I am certain that "correcting" this concept gives the teachers at the child day-care centers their most difficult intellectual problem. Unfortunately, the child does not seem to learn the equally important concept of "yours" with anything like the same facility. It would seem to be a moral problem with the child, not an intellectual one. That is why the authority of the parent is so vital in getting the child to acknowledge the validity of both of these interlocked concepts.

Children learn at astonishing rates of speed. All parents take pride in this fact, yet not one parent in a hundred really seems to understand just how fast his child does learn. The ability of a child to understand and act in terms of the most subtle human nuances – the look, the change of voice, a parent's weariness – is so great that it puts to shame whole teams of social psychologists and their computer cards. Children are connivers; they are seldom stupid. At times they seem to affect stupidity in order to better expedite their conniving. Parents who fail to see the signs of an infant's con job only confirm the child in any lack of respect he may have for the family. Children see and they remember differences between stated principles and demonstrated action. That is a child's means of survival, and he learns it very well and very early.

Parents for centuries have used the phrase, "Do as I say and not as I do," as a cover for their own moral weaknesses. A child may do just as his parent says, but in all likelihood he is thinking something very different. The mind of the child must be challenged by something more than brute force as he grows older; the sooner his mind is challenged, the better. Force, used to conquer a child's rebellious will, does not guarantee anything about the state of the child's thoughts. Yet, in the long run, the parent's real battle is for the mind of his child; and there are innumerable competing institutions that are in the business of intellectual conversion. The competition begins the day the child goes to school.

The Responsibility of Ownership

If the concept of private property is worth defending, and if personal responsibility is the moral basis of private property, then the family must be the scene of

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the child's introduction to the responsibilities of ownership. Sadly, most parents have been so utterly compromised — morally compromised — by the collectivistic concept of "the well-integrated child" that they fail to take advantage of a marvelous opportunity to teach their children the meaning of responsible ownership. These same parents are later shocked to discover that their teenager has abandoned "bourgeois concepts of property and morality." The child drops out of his tax-supported university, joins a commune, and openly defies the parent to stop him. Of course he has no respect for such bourgeois concepts; he was never expected to adopt them! The family structure that produced him never rewarded him in terms of those concepts. He might have been expected to do well individually outside the family — in school, in athletics, and so forth — but not inside the family.

Take, for example, the idea of "sharing." All well-integrated children share their toys with their brothers and sisters and with all the other boys and girls they play with. "Let Billy play with your airplane, sweetheart." Now "sweetheart" may know very well that Billy is a semiprofessional demolitionist, but he is supposed to let Billy play with his airplane, whether or not it took him a week to build it. Or maybe "sweetheart" is just another Ebenezer Scrooge. It really does not matter one way or the other. If Mama enforces her request that Billy be allowed to play with the airplane, she has begun to undercut the idea of ownership in the mind of her child. A request is one thing; enforcement is another. The child should be given the right to ignore the request without physical reprisal from his mother or Billy.

The Child's Decision

The parent can always give a whole barrage of cogent reasons why sharing is preferable to stinginess: people do not like selfish people, people will not share their toys with selfish people (which is, I think, the really effective argument), selfish people are mean, selfish people become social outcasts. Yet, the child is simultaneously informed that it is impossible to buy people's friendship. It is up to him to balance these competing propositions in his own mind. (If the parent thinks this is a tough knot to untie, wait until he tries to explain that God's favor cannot be purchased, but that faith without works is dead.) In any case, the decision ought to be the child's. If there are social costs associated with being selfish, let the child find out for himself, and let him

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evaluate them in terms of his own psychic needs. Maybe he likes toys better than friends. Maybe he will grow up to be like Howard Hughes. But it will have been his option, and he will have borne the costs. That is what the free society is all about. It cannot guarantee that everyone will grow up liked (or even well-liked, as Willie Loman saw life's goal), but it can see to it that everyone pays his own share.

Group Relationships

Children are not stupid concerning group relationships. They understand why and how their peers operate. They have a larger stake in this kind of understanding than their parents could have; parental memories grow increasingly dim with age, and parents often have many other things to worry about. A child's concentration is focused. He learns to predict how his actions will be received. He may not act in terms of what he knows, but he is continually learning. If he thinks that he ought to share with others, he will. He can test his parents' remarks about the benefits of sharing. If he likes the results, fine; if not, he bears the costs. It is a very good, and from the parent's point of view, very inexpensive form of training.

If the parent continually interferes with the right of the child to do what he wants with his own property, he is setting up the child for every kind of collectivist panacea. He will learn that titles to property are less valid than the ability to manipulate the authorities to your own purposes. He will learn that the authorities cannot be trusted to fulfil their promises with respect to ownership. He will learn that "yours" really is not that fundamental a concept, since "mine" is not enforced either. He will learn very early of the realities of what Ayn Rand has called "the economy of pull."

In Matters of Property

If a child is not taught the meaning of personal responsibility from the beginning, the family has failed in part of its function. That is why enforced sharing is so insidious. It destroys the links between ownership, power, and responsibility. The parent who makes his child share anything with anyone for any reason (other than disciplinary action for an infraction against another child's right of ownership) is courting long-run rebellion. He can suggest; he dare not enforce.

It should come as no surprise that violation of the rights of property by a parent brings with it an immediate punishment. I have seen parents spend whole evenings trying to straighten out

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what can only be described as property disputes among children. Hours and hours of listening to "Johnny took my fire engine," and "Bobby took my Baby Jane Throw-up Doll," and "Well, she won't give me back my Frankenstein monster." It must drive them crazy, as it does me; but I can go home later on. Kids are manipulaters by trade, as all people without power have to be; if the parent sets himself up as the allocator of children's scarce resources, he can expect to spend a lot of time at that task.

Children can disrupt the family for so many reasons. They hit each other, tease each other, knock each other down stairs, compete for parental affection. That is what they do collectively; individually they can be equally trying on a parent. "When they're quiet, I worry," is a universal sentiment among mothers. So when the property issue is added to the long list of parental harrassment devices, it ought to be shut off from the start. Each child must learn very early that the rights of his brothers must be respected, and that when the parent learns of an infraction, punishment follows with the regularity of a machine. Not that the parent comes in and settles the dispute in a friendly way, but that he comes in and settles it by swift justice. If the parent is only a friendly mediator, he will be a harassed mediator; no kid will cooperate with his brother when he thinks the authorities will only restore the *status quo ante*. He has nothing to lose and the toy to gain, and his brother knows it. But if he knows that the minute the story of his infraction gets to the parent, he will be punished, he may begin to see the advantages of self-discipline. He may begin to mature. (If states would see the truth of this with respect to mediating labor-management disputes, there would be fewer strikes and fewer non-negotiable demands — i.e., there would be more industrial maturity.)

Watch the Vigilante

There is one justification that is used by children for every kind of deviation: "He wouldn't give my toy to me, so I . . . ." A parent who stands ready to enforce the right of property in his household will not have to listen to that one; he can punish both the thief (for that is what he is) and the vigilante who retaliated. He can encourage victims to come to him because they can trust him to uphold them in their arguments. We expect that much as adults from the civil authorities; we should provide it in that sphere where we are the officials. We should be

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able to be trusted, day in and day out, to render justice, whether we are tired, happy, sour, busy. The regularity of justice, the very predictability of it, is more respected by the child than any theories that a parent might spin in those rare heart-to-heart talks. It takes self-discipline in an adult to provide this kind of regularity; that is why there is truth to the phrase that delinquent parents are the chief cause of delinquent children. The lack of self-discipline becomes a heritage of families throughout several generations.

Buy It Yourself

A judicious use of the weekly allowance should be started as soon as the child can say, "Buy it for me" at the supermarket. He learns what buying means very early. That is why supermarket psychologists set up the candy counters by the check-out stands, and at eye level for tots. They know that few mothers have the moral fiber to say no to a squalling child; at least, they will not do it every time. The best argument to "Get it for me," is "Shut up or I'll tan your hide" (if it is meant); the second best answer is "Buy it yourself." The older the child, the better is the second answer.

One of the appalling things I have witnessed over the years is the sight of parents at church giving their children money to put in the collection plate. They think they are teaching their children to sacrifice for God. They underrate the child's intelligence. He knows quite well the difference between "giving" and acting as a financial broker for a parent. If a parent plays this game, the child should be told that he can keep every cent of it to use as he would his other income. Then the child can learn what sacrifice is. If the parents hold to the ancient and respected custom of tithing, then the child should be encouraged to tithe his income. But the only justification for a parent's requiring the child to tithe would be that the elders over the parent have the same institutional option. If he is not institutionally obligated to tithe, then the old rule holds: do as I say *and* as I do, for they are of one piece. The child should not be forced to tithe. The Bible says that God honors a cheerful giver; that is what the child should be taught to be.

Applying the Principles

The defense of the free market cannot be made simply in terms of charts and graphs and technical explanations of market efficiency by professional economists. It must be defended by a willingness on the part of its supporters to understand its principles and

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apply them in all the relevant spheres of their personal lives. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," wrote the Apostle James. Indeed; if a parent is not willing to take the time to apply the principles that he professes to hold most dear within the confines of the institution that he holds most dear, he is not serious about his commitment to those principles. If parents use the family as a zone of safety from the responsibility of laboring to apply basic moral principles, then they should be ready to see their children on television during the mass arrests at the local university. If the principles of private ownership and personal responsibility are not worth teaching by word and example to one's children, they are not worth teaching at all.

Independence

JACQUELYN TILL

INDEPENDENCE is a tough, leathery word, ram-rod straight and strong. If it were a person it would have been my "Papa," a man whose very existence was "independence." You could not separate the two – as though the word were created, if not by him, then at least for him. He was "independence" walking around for all to see if they were of a mind to look.

It seems I remember him best in hot weather. Perhaps because it was in summer I saw him most; or maybe because that's the best time of year and we remember *things* we like best at *times* we like best. Anyway, on a hot summer day about 11:30, after setting the table, I would run to the field to tell him that it was almost "dinner time." Not that it was necessary for he was always at the house by noon. Never a noonday passed that he didn't listen to Gabriel Heater give the news.

Mrs. Till is a housewife in Houston. Her article is reprinted, by permission, from the *Republican Banner*.

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Yet, I would go because this time of walking to the house with him was a glorious time. It was then Papa would talk. Not exactly to me because I was a child and he really didn't know how to have "meaningful discussions" (as modern psychologists would say) with one so small. But talk he would. And since there was only me to hear him, it was a special time, indeed. I would have to walk fast, almost run, to keep up with his long strides. Too, I was trying to step on patches of grass where I could because black Texas dirt scorches bare feet. Along we went, the two of us, never holding hands (I was always two or three steps behind), never touching. He talked and I absorbed every word, never speaking. I didn't need to, for at these times I was part of his soul.

Remembering Things

During these walks I found that he had played in the Alamo when he was small like me, before it had been restored by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. He would tell of pretending he was Bowie or Crockett or Travis, but mostly Bowie. Oh, how I longed to have been there then. He had slept in packing-crates many nights because he had left home so young. Though I wouldn't have said so, I was glad I wasn't there then. Once Papa said he didn't remember having a pair of shoes until he was nearly thirteen. As I wiggled my toes in the hot dirt, I thought that would be nice for I did hate to wear shoes. Then he went on to say how he would sell papers and stand on the grate in front of the Bank in winter so the heated air would keep his feet warm. Tears almost came as I thought of him with no shoes in the cold – thought of my own feet in winter when I jumped into bed between icy sheets before the bed got warm. No, it would not be nice to be without shoes. He told how one day a man, a complete stranger, took him off the street and bought him a pair of shoes without so much as "by-your-leave." I loved that man, whoever he was.

I discovered Papa could count and say all kinds of funny sounding words in Spanish and that he taught himself to read and do numbers. That was why he whispered to himself when he read and pointed to the words sometimes even though he was grown, something we were never allowed to do in school, not even use a marker anymore. He talked of men, too, like Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin and Sam Houston. He talked about William Tell who wouldn't bow to another man's hat and how that was the most important part of the story, not the

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part about shooting an apple off his son's head. I couldn't see why, but Papa said it, so I knew it was so.

A Greater Vision

Each time, about mid-way to the house, Papa would stop and look out across the land and I would stop and look too. All I could see were pastures, fields, a few cows, and heat making it look wavy. I would look up at Papa again and then look back across the countryside because it seemed he saw *something so wonderful* out there; but all I had missed on my first look were a few bees buzzing in a "Black-eyed-Susan."

It wasn't until much later, when Papa lived only in my heart, that I realized he was telling me on these walks, the best way he knew how, of this country where a boy could have so little and still become a man that could do so much. He was telling me of this country where one man was as good as another regardless of his monetary wealth or position and where he could achieve whatever he set out to achieve. He need pay homage to no man. He was telling me of this country where men helped others in need, not because they had to, but simply because they wanted to; because it was the right thing to do.

Yes, I realized then that this tough, leathery farmer, ram-rod straight and strong, knew that great as the legacy of freedom was, it was not quite enough for his granddaughter. He had been giving me that greatest of gifts – an awareness of it all. He knew one day in the future I would put together these pieces he had placed in my mind. On that day, when I stood barefoot again to feel the hot, black dirt, looking out across this same country, remembering those long ago days, I finally saw what he had so often seen. This time, when Papa was standing not in front of me but within me, I was able to see through his eyes the wondrousness of this country. The gift he had been giving throughout the years was now totally mine. And I knew, at last, why I so love the word "Independence."

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CLARENCE B. CARSON

THE FOUNDING OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC

2

The English Heritage

ONE of the major elements in the complex of experience and background which the Americans brought to their founding activities was their English heritage. The majority of the colonists were of English lineage, and they were preponderantly British in origin, since the latter designation would include those of Scotch and Irish descent. What the Americans constructed when they got the opportunity was mainly alterations and reshapings of their English heritage.

Nonetheless, there was considerable ambiguity in the attitude of the colonists toward their English background. Indeed, this ambiguity has attended the attitudes of those who have come from Europe over the centuries to settle in America. On the one hand, they have rejected the Old World, the most obvious sort of rejection being their very coming to the New World. Many who came have fled from one kind or another of persecution or oppression. The Old World has often been described by those who betook themselves to the New as a seat of persecution and corruption. Certainly, American colonists of the latter part of the eighteenth century readily identified the English Church and

Dr. Carson is Chairman, Social Science Department, Okaloosa-Walton College. He is a noted lecturer and author, his latest book entitled *Throttling the Railroads.*

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government with corruption – the Church with its pampered hierarchy and impoverished parish priests, and the government with its rotten boroughs and members of Parliament whose votes were bought by the monarch with sinecures.

And yet, however ambiguous their attitude toward it may have been at times, the Americans did not basically reject their English heritage. Instead, they valued it essentially, made great efforts to preserve it, treasured its outlines, and, when the time came, builded upon it. From first to last, over a colonial period of a little less than two hundred years these settlers showed their attachment to and dependence upon England. Fathers who could afford it frequently sent their sons to be educated in England. They read English books, watched English plays, if any, and consumed English-produced goods.

A Pro-British Bias

In many ways, the settlers showed their preference for things English, both in words and deeds. Professor Samuel E. Morison says that two early New England writers, Nathaniel Morton and Edward Winslow, declared that one of the main reasons the Pilgrims left Holland for the New World was the fear that their children would lose their language and nationality.[1] One historian has recently shown how devoted the Puritans were to their English background. He says, "They were hardly more worried that their laws should be 'scriptural,' that is approved by the Bible, than that they should be sufficiently English; and that any changes in English laws should have ample warrant in local needs."[2] Even more strongly, he declares:

> Scholarly dispute as to whether early New England law was primarily scriptural or primarily English is beside the point. For early New Englanders these two turned out to be pretty much the same. Very little of their early legal literature attempted to construct new institutions from Biblical materials. They were trying, for the most part, to demonstrate the coincidence between what the scriptures required and what English law had already provided.[3]

A case could be made, however, that the New Englanders were among the least devoted to their English heritage of the American colonists. They were dissenters from the Church, developed a considerable literature of their own, were opposed to such things as

[1] William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Samuel E. Morison, ed. (New York: Modern Library, 1967), p. 25.

[2] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), p. 21.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

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plays, had colleges of their own, and had more latitude than was usual in developing their governments. Certainly, many of the other colonies conformed much more closely to English ways. A Virginian, writing in 1728, contrasted that colony with others, and proclaimed that "Virginia may be justly esteemed the happy Retreat of *true Britons* and true Churchmen."[4] Statements affirming the connection between Britain and America can be found in abundance all the way up to the Declaration of Independence.

Some Pressure to Conform

Not all the affirmations of admiration for things English nor all the reliance on Britain should be taken at face value as indicating the real state of sentiment or that everything that was done was voluntary. Colonists were under a variety of pressures and restraints which bent them toward such conformity. The charters under which they were supposed to operate usually required that their laws not be contrary to English law. For example, the General Court of Massachusetts was authorized by the charter to make laws for the inhabitants, with the proviso that they be "not contrairie to the Lawes of this our Realme of England."[5] The Maryland charter provided that the proprietor "was to make no laws incompatible with those of England, and none without the consent of the freemen or their representatives."[6] Since others usually had similar provisions, colonists found it in their interest not only to conform to the British pattern but to profess to do so as well.

A dependence on Britain for many things was engendered by British regulations. In general, they were encouraged over the years to buy various products from the mother country because of restrictions on their manufacture in the colonies. Such restriction definitely hampered the development of an American literature by limiting printing opportunities. An American printer could rarely undertake the publication of a book because of the scarcity of type. "In England the supply had been limited as part of the control of the press; a Star Chamber Decree of 1637 allowed only four persons, each with a limited number of apprentices, to operate type-foundries at any one time. Not until the Revolution could American printers buy type of American

[4] Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia* (New York: Joseph Sabin, 1856), p. 48.

[5] Quoted in Boorstin, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[6] T. Harry Williams, *et. al.*, *A History of the United States, I* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 34.

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manufacture."[7] In the late seventeenth century, the King provided the Governor of Virginia with orders "that no person be permitted to use any press for printing upon any occasion whatsoever."[8] Not all the dependence of the colonies upon England was by choice, it is clear.

Even so, the Americans did revere the essentials of their English heritage. They could hardly have done otherwise; to reject it out of hand would have been to repudiate much of themselves as they were. The furniture of their minds was made up largely of British conceptions. Their angle of vision was set to see things the way one of such descendance would see them. The best proof that they revered the heritage, however, is that they kept so much of it when they had an opportunity following the revolt to dispense with it. To see that this was so, it will be useful to call up the outlines of the English systems and ways.

British Conservatism

A profound ingredient of the English heritage is the conservative cast of mind. In a general sense, this may not distinguish British peoples from most others. It is quite likely that most peoples at most times have been preponderantly conservative, though not necessarily in a discriminating way. It could even be argued that man is by nature conservative (as are also the lower animals) in that he usually prefers to continue to do things in the same way he has done them. Small children tend to be conservative in insisting on ritualizing activities and in their intolerance toward things or people that are different. Such conservatism is undifferentiated in its posture toward things familiar, reveres them for their familiarity alone.

British conservatism is something different from and more than what might well be called "brute conservatism." If it were not, it should hardly have come to our attention, for it would only be a universal condition, one which would be no more worthwhile to announce than that Englishmen have two legs. The particularities of British conservatism took shape over many centuries of experience, took shape in the Middle Ages as a people defended their ways against Danish and Norman monarchs, as the classes battled against arbitrary and despotic kings, as the thrust of change was blunted by the persistent clinging to ancient rights and privileges.

British conservatism was a reality long before Edmund Burke so elegantly gave it a set of articu-

[7] Boorstin, *op. cit.*, p. 319.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 332.

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lated concepts and a language. Englishmen over many centuries harked back to the Magna Charta as the fount of their privileges. Parliament for its first several centuries did not claim to legislate; it claimed only the power to participate in declaring what the law *was*, and the law was, most frequently, what it had been since the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. When the English Church broke from the Roman Church, the least changes were made in it of all the churches born out of the Protestant Reformation. The English had a revolution, of sorts, in the middle of the seventeenth century, but in short order they returned to their older arrangements. This is not to say that the British did not change; it is rather to affirm that when they changed they kept much more than they changed, and they were given to defending their changes on the grounds that they were restoring an earlier condition. It was this that the Americans inherited and brought with them to their constitution-making and their attitudes toward institutions.

The Literary Heritage

One of the most important of the things the colonists derived from England was the literary heritage. The vehicle through which it was transmitted was the English language, which became the tongue of the continental colonies. It is easy to ignore the significance of so common a thing as language, to imagine that what language one uses does not matter. It is quite otherwise, of course, for each language has its nuances, shades of meaning, rhythms, and tones. A language embodies much of the history and experience of a people; it embraces their values and transmits their culture.

The English language was just becoming an effective literary language when the English colonies were settled in the seventeenth century. The Renaissance and Reformation were the major movements out of which English was developed into a literary language. Latin had been the language used by peoples of Western Europe for formal and elegant secular writings, as well as those of the Church. The break with the Roman Church hastened the development of national languages, and the Renaissance gave great impetus to growth of an imaginative and scientific literature. The English language came into its own with Elizabethan poets and dramatists, the King James Version of the Bible (1611), and the scientific writings of the seventeenth century. Hence, Englishmen going forth into the wilder-

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ness of the New World brought with them a potent and virile vehicle of communication.

It was through this language, too, that they imbibed the literature. One historian of ideas notes that "Americans shared with Great Britain the balladry and the more formal literature of the motherland. But the literary legacy was greater than this, for it was through English and Scotch channels that the Graeco-Roman classics and the literature of the Renaissance were transmitted to the American people. . . . The British newspaper, pamphlet, broadside, and magazine likewise provided colonial Americans with models."[9]

By the time of the American revolt, they had at the least four major categories of literary influence from Britain. The first of these to reach its fruition was that of the English Renaissance. Outstanding works were produced by Thomas More, Edmund Spenser, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, and, pre-eminently, William Shakespeare. Spanning a much greater period of time and encompassing a much more diverse bounty of offerings was the English Reformation literature. It ranges from the writings of John Wyclif in the late fourteenth century to John Wesley in the late eighteenth century, and includes those of Hugh Latimer, Miles Coverdale, John Tyndale, Robert Browne, Richard Hooker, John Bunyan, John Milton, George Fox, and so forth. A third category was the seventeenth century philosophical and scientific literature which included the works of Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, Isaac Newton, Roger Boyle, Edmund Halley, and John Locke. The literary heritage which had the most direct impact on founding the American Republic was that of political writings. This was a rich literature indeed, for it included the contributions of James Harrington, Edward Coke, Thomas Hobbes (not much referred to by Americans but an essential part of the justification of government because of the nature of man), Algernon Sidney, John Lilburne, John Milton, John Locke, John Trenchard, Earl of Shaftesbury, Thomas Gordon, William Blackstone, and Joseph Addison, among many others.

Customs and Mores

The British tradition included a complex of social arrangements, customs, institutions, and mores. Some of these had the sanction of law, and in some cases there were attempts to establish and maintain

[9] Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought* (New York: Harper, 1951, 2nd ed.), p. 4.

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these relationships by law. Indeed, it would be difficult to name an institution that was not in some way buttressed by the power of government in seventeenth century England. The Church was established, supported by taxation, and attendance at its services required. Economic organizations were usually chartered by government, given monopolies for trade or manufacture in some jurisdiction, their activities viewed as adjuncts of government. Manufactures were restricted as to where they might be carried on, wages controlled (usually in an attempt to keep them lower than the market price), and prices of goods frequently fixed. The development of libertarian ideas in America (as well as in England) is given greater meaning with such a background in mind.

Marriage, the family, and property were tangled in a web of restrictions and prescriptions. According to law, the landed inheritance must go to the eldest son, a system known as primogeniture. In like manner, estates were frequently entailed so as to prevent their being broken up and disposed of during the lifetime of the owner. Both these practices were widely established in the American colonies. Moreover, in England, according to ancient practice, tenants had claims, in perpetuity, to the lands which they rented. A strong case could be made that these, and similar practices, buttressed the family as an institution. Not only did the eldest son inherit the estate (or other claims to property) but also the responsibilities of the father, such as, to look after the widowed mother, to take care of unattached females in the family and any others who might not be able to provide for themselves.

Classless America

Probably, though, these regulations and prescriptions had much more directly the purpose of maintaining a class system. Certainly, England had a class system in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though it had become more flexible, more subtle, and more complex than it had been in earlier centuries. There was an aristocracy made up of the titled nobility and the upper clergy, whose members had the privilege and responsibility of sitting in the House of Lords. There was what has been most commonly referred to as a middle class composed of the landed gentry and merchants and tradesmen. The gentry were reckoned by their rent rolls, but the merchants were not so formally recognized. The merchants were a class primarily because they had been granted government privi-

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leges, patents, and monopolies in trade and manufacture. There were assorted other free men beneath these in the scale, yeoman farmers, mechanics, parish priests, and so on. Below these were the disfranchised, those who did not have the basic political privileges and had insufficient economic privileges to be independent. An attempt was made to transfer the outlines of this system to America.

Government Chartered Activities

There were all sorts of institutions which derived from England, but perhaps the main outlines and character of many of them can be suggested by the idea of the corporation. A corporation, most basically, is some organization authorized by the sovereign. It might be a political organization such as the town, an economic one such as a trading company, or an educational one such as a college. The monarch authorized such organizations by granting to them charters or patents which spelled out their privileges, the scope of their activities, and might include various limitations. Such corporations were relics of the Middle Ages, but they were given new vitality at the time of the settling of America by the founding of colonies on the basis of such charters. The tendency of this method of establishing organizations was to make all activity hinge on government and be controlled by government.

The British Constitution

British political institutions and practices had the most direct bearing on the founding of the United States, and it was from these that the most extensive borrowings were made. The most basic of these was the constitution itself. Some examination of it will clarify the relation between British and American political organizations.

It is no simple matter to describe the English constitution. It cannot be read in a single document as can the United States Constitution. Indeed, much of it is nowhere written down in a document or collection of documents. It is a combination of several sorts of things: the first of these is the way things are done in government, the procedures, practices, and customs; the second would be great acts which have altered these or fixed them more firmly, such as the Act of Supremacy of 1534 which placed the leadership of the Church in the hands of the monarch, or the Restoration Settlement of 1660 and the immediately succeeding years; a third kind would be great documents which have limited the king, such as the Magna Charta,

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the Petition of Right, and the Bill of Rights; fourth, would be court decisions which built up a body of law.

What the Americans learned or deduced from the existence of the English Constitution was a particular fortification of the idea of a higher law. There were other sources of the American belief in the higher law than the British constitution, but this was the main embodiment of it with which they were familiar. Americans learned over a long colonial period how one set of laws could be used to limit and restrict their own governments. Many of them did not miss the point, either, that such restrictions could be protective of their rights and privileges, for however much the colonists might resent certain restrictions, the requirements that their laws must conform to British laws secured to them their rights and privileges as citizens within an empire. The best proof of this is that some of the same ways they had been restrained as colonies under the English constitution were reintroduced as restraints on the states in the United States Constitution.

Separation and Balance of Power

The principle of separation and balance of power among the branches was embodied in British government for Americans, as it was for the Frenchman, Montesquieu. Of the three branches, it might be supposed that Americans were least attracted to monarchy. So they were, if monarchy be considered only in its manifestation of the trappings of royalty, the apex of an aristocratic structure, and hereditary rule. Such trappings are only historical accidents, an Aristotelian might say; the essence of monarchy is rule by one. Americans did not abandon the monarchical principle, as we shall see; they trimmed away the superficial aspects of it, kept it under different guises or names, and counterbalanced it with other principles of disposing of power. Rule by one – limited by being circumscribed – was kept in the office of governor and president.

Not only did Americans keep the monarchical principle, but they kept many of the functions that the English monarch had performed. In England, the king was chief executive; so are the governor and the President. The king appointed officers under him, took the leadership in forming and executing foreign policy, was in control of the military forces, and had the prerogative of mercy, as well as being ceremonial head of state. All these powers, the President may exercise. Of course, there are some which were

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sloughed off, such as head of a state church and all those that have to do with the hereditary principle.

Governmental Instruments

The debt of Americans to the English legislative system is much better known than that to the monarchical principle. The most obvious borrowing is of the two-house legislature. In like manner, there are similarities between the House of Commons and the United States House of Representatives: each is composed of members elected by district, each is the more numerous body, and each has the power of origination of revenue measures. The House of Lords and the Senate have both similarities and differences: the Lords are hereditary largely, while the members of the Senate were originally chosen by state legislatures and still have fixed terms; each body is the smaller of the two; the Lords had more court functions, while the Senate has more to do with appointments in the executive branch. One court function of Parliament is preserved for Congress in the power of impeachment, another in the investigative powers.

Much of the English legal system was established in the American colonies and some of it continued after the break. The most basic principle of justice, which the British had long labored to establish, was government by law. It is frequently described as a government of laws rather than of men. The fundamental requirement for this to prevail is that men be tried by standing laws, that they lose life, liberty, or property only after having been convicted of violating some law which was on the books preceding the committing of the act.

A variety of procedures in English law supported this principle. The underlying one was the right to a writ of habeas corpus, the right of a person being held to demand that he be charged with violating some law or be released. As one historian notes, "Meant to serve as an effective check on arbitrary power, the writ was clearly established by Parliament in the late seventeenth century as a means of releasing a person unlawfully imprisoned."[10]

Independent Judiciary

Another English principle which influenced Americans was that of having an independent judiciary. This principle was fairly well established before the end of the seventeenth century. The main threat to the independence of the

[10] Robert A. Rutland, *The Birth of the Bill of Rights* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 15.

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judiciary had been the monarch, who had from time immemorial tried to use the courts as extensions and instruments of himself. The way to do this was through the power of appointment and dismissal. Several of the Stuart kings were notorious for subduing the courts by these devices. Following the Glorious Revolution (1688-89), monarchs could no longer dismiss judges, and in the course of the eighteenth century kings abandoned the practice of appointing new judges upon their accession to the throne. England had an independent judiciary; judges could serve during good behavior, subject to dismissal only by both houses of Parliament.

Grounded in Common Law

The cornerstone of English law was the common law. The common law had taken shape during the Middle Ages as a result of decisions of the king's courts who sought to find the common elements in the diverse customs and practices among the English people. It arose as an edifice from judicial decisions over many centuries and was a depository of legal experience for a people. Undoubtedly, the common law was, and is, a mixed bag; one can find somewhere in it rulings along almost any line sought. It is ordinarily seen as having much more consistency than that, however, because in any given era the rulings fall into a pattern. It is profoundly conservative, for the law is resistant to change; courts are ordinarily considered to be bound by precedents, and legislative enactments are usually only frivolously suggestive and tentative beside it. By the time the judges have brought a legislative act within the confines of existing law, any radical character which the act might have had originally will usually have been lost. The common law is the main device by which the courts counterbalance legislatures in the English system. Among the protections of individuals under the common law, were the following, according to one account: "due process of law, habeas corpus, and an admonition 'that no man ought to be imprisoned, but for some certain cause. . . .' The common law also offered accused persons the expectation that they would readily be 'tried in the county where the fact is committed.' Double jeopardy for the accused was forbidden. . . ."[11]

Trial by Jury

Trial by jury was common practice in England long before Europeans became aware of the Americas. Courts are, after all, instru-

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

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ments of government, judges frequently appointed by the executive power. Juries, by contrast, are made up of private citizens, people in like condition to whoever is being tried in that they are of the ruled. They are charged with determination of the facts, but these must ever be viewed in the light of the penalty to be assessed if the person is found guilty. The jury may also have most directly in mind the future peace of the community. Hence, trial by jury was venerated both by the English and their American descendants.

The English heritage, then, was a rich one. Many had left England to come to America for one reason or another. Yet, their coming they would rarely construe as a repudiation of their heritage. Those things that drove them from England could be and usually were thought of as aberrations from the traditions. The Church of England was a corruption of original Christianity; therefore, it needed to be purified. The tyrannies of monarchs were violations of the constitution. In this view, the colonists were frequently joined by a numerous body of the English people and could find their ideas substantiated by British thinkers.

Of course, the Americans made innovations in the English heritage. They grew away from the English system in many ways and, at the least, became devoted to their interpretation of it. What they chose to preserve of it was that attenuation of it that prevailed in America, that which had become a part of themselves out of long experience. It is time now to examine that experience.

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HOWARD CALLAWAY

DURING the past several years there has arisen in this country a great deal of discontent and a dreary pessimism concerning the prospects for happier times. The most persistent explanation is that the government, "the system," has failed to meet the needs and aspirations of various large groups of people. And this is exactly what has happened. To admit the fact, however, is not to justify the fulfillment of such "needs" and desires.

For a long time, an undisputed article of faith widely held in this nation is that government can and must see to the needs of the people. Among those who recognize that government is incapable of such a task, it should come as no surprise that the result of endless promises would be frustration and discontent. If people are told and come to believe that they have a right to the unearned, a right to "personal fulfillment," which then fails to materialize, small wonder that they become frustrated and sullen.

There is, however, another source of the discontent and pessimism so prevalent today. Expectations inflated out of all proportions have lead to frustration, and this frustration has been increasingly focused upon the political system in a demand for fundamental changes. The welfare state alone is not enough, they believe; thus, a more radical reorganization of society will be required before various important goals can be achieved. Their demands for change in this direction have been resisted to some extent, which is the second source of discontent I mentioned. The advocates of collectivism are attempting to change the "system" through various political means.

My point is that political means — ranging from party politics to mass rallies — cannot effectively bring about a reorganization of society. The people of this country are by no means of one mind in regard to the changes which the collectivist would like to see; so the problem is to change the minds of those who disagree. Such an objective, I think, cannot be accom-

Mr. Callaway is pursuing graduate studies in philosophy at Temple University.

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plished by political methods. It is possible, of course, to silence disagreement and to intimidate active resistance by political techniques, but it cannot be done effectively in a society with relative freedom, where civil liberties persist.

Political means, involving the use or threat of force and the attempt to gain "power" or the legal right to use such force against others, will not change anyone's thinking. Thus, political techniques bring about further frustration when the objectives are fundamental intellectual and cultural changes.

Where the rights of the individual are neither recognized nor respected, politics is simply formalized and legalized plunder. As Chairman Mao tells us, "political power proceeds from the barrel of a gun." This is the necessary result of ignoring man's nature, of ignoring man's rights. In a similar way, the attempt to change society through political means, or through the use of force, whatever it might be called or in whatever form, is also an attempt to ignore man's nature. Man is the rational animal and all those creations which are specifically human are the product of the human mind. To be rational means to follow the evidence available and according to the dictates of logic. Thus, the attempt to force a change in society treats those who must be coerced as less than human, as irrational beings.

Through Voluntary Agreements

The creation of civilization, of a rationally ordered society, is one of mankind's greatest achievements. Insofar as it has been achieved, it has been done through voluntary agreements among rational men. The great efficiency of capitalism springs from the fact that under such a system men are free to use their energies productively and to voluntarily associate with other men to create a freely chosen and dynamic order. The overt structure of civilization reflects this order in the form of those institutions within which men agree to cooperate. Obviously then, a free society, a human society, cannot be created through the methods of politics, for there is a definite relationship between ends and means.

In view of the nature of a free society, those who advocate such a society must recognize that the methods for bringing it about must necessarily differ from political methods developed and used by the advocates of collectivism.

The greatest strength of a relatively free society lies in the free and voluntary institutions which constitute its overt form. Free so-

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cieties are weakened by disorder and disruption in the same way and for the same reasons that the economy is weakened by any sort of intervention. Collectivism, on the other hand, breeds on the decay of civilized, ordered institutions. This is why power blocs, mass uprisings, demagoguery, and vicious rhetoric are such fit weapons for the establishment of any form of collectivism.

Progress Toward Freedom Builds on the Voluntary Order

The path toward freedom is entirely different. Those who advocate freedom must attempt to build upon the voluntary order of society rather than to weaken or destroy it. One must act in accord with man's nature as a rational being if anything human is to be accomplished. Claiming a right to defend oneself against looters is one thing. To think that physical force, whether openly or covertly employed, can create an atmosphere conducive to a free society is quite another thing. The most efficient and practical way to improve society is wide open to the serious student with a dedication to liberty. There can be no good society until there are good men, and the improvement of men is manifestly an intellectual project.

There are always those who call for "direct action," and "do it now." This can mean anything from getting involved in party politics to fomenting revolution. However, this urge springs from a basic misunderstanding of man and his potential. This urge ignores man's intellectual nature, the ability of individuals and of men in general to improve themselves through the use of their minds. Freedom can only be preserved or extended if it becomes a vital issue which will engage the best minds in every field of endeavor. It is no accident that the concept of property rights has fallen into disrepute at a time when the term "intellectual" has come to be used as a synonym for "socialist." To understand the philosophical case for freedom is not merely a first step in a long march; such understanding supplies the cultural underpinnings of society, and it is the entire battle.

To change a society, requires a change in the way people think. People may choose freedom, but this will not happen unless they come to see its value, see why they should abandon the philosophies and ideologies of collectivism. Armies of destruction may move on their bellies and political movements on the strength of numbers; but man, insofar as he is human, is moved by the power of ideas.

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Defining Poverty

HENRY HAZLITT

ANY STUDY of poverty should logically begin with a definition of the problem we are trying to solve. Precisely what *is* poverty?

Of the thousands of books and articles on the subject that have appeared over the last two centuries, it is astonishing how few have troubled to ask this question. Their writers have taken it for granted that both they and their readers knew precisely what was being discussed. Yet popularly the term is very vague. It is nearly always employed in a relative rather than an absolute sense. In Victorian England it became the fashion for some politicians to say that "the Rich and the Poor form Two Nations." But as every family's income, if arranged on a scale according to its dollar amount, would probably form a dot on a continuous smooth curve, the dividing line between the poor and the not-poor would be an arbitrary one. Is the poorer half of the population anywhere to be called the Poor, and the richer half the Rich?

The discussion today is conducted dominantly in these comparative terms. Our reformers are constantly telling us that we must improve the condition of the lowest fifth or the lowest third of the population. This way of discussing the subject was made fashionable by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his Second Inaugural address in January, 1937: "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." (The objective standards on which this statement was based were never specified.)

It is obvious, however, that all merely relative definitions of poverty make the problem insoluble. If we were to double the real income of everybody, or triple it, there would still be a lowest third,

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Henry Hazlitt is well-known to FREEMAN readers as author, columnist, editor, lecturer, and practitioner of freedom. This article will appear as a chapter in a forthcoming book, *The Conquest of Poverty*, to be published by Arlington House.

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a lowest fifth, or a lowest tenth.

Comparative definitions lead us, in fact, into endless difficulties. If poverty means having less than one wants, nearly all of us are poor. If poverty means being worse off than somebody else, then all but one of us is poor. An enormous number of us are, in fact, *subjectively* deprived. As one writer on poverty succinctly put it nearly sixty years ago: "It is part of man's nature never to be satisfied as long as he sees other people better off than himself."[1]

Attempt at Definition

A discussion of the role that envy plays in economic and all human affairs can be deferred to another place. In any case we are driven to try to find an absolute or objective definition of poverty. This turns out to be more difficult than it might at first seem. Suppose we say that a man is in poverty when he has less than enough income, or less than enough in nutrition (and shelter and clothing), to maintain himself in normal health and strength. We soon find that the objective determination of this amount is by no means simple.

Let us turn to some of the recent "official" definitions in the United States. In January, 1964, when President Johnson was launching his "war on poverty," the annual report of the Council of Economic Advisers contained a long section on the problem. This offered not one but several definitions of poverty. One was relative: "One fifth of our families and nearly one-fifth of our total population are poor." A second was at least partly subjective: "By the poor we mean those who are not now maintaining a decent standard of living – those whose basic needs exceed their means to satisfy them." Each of us might have his own conception of a "decent" standard, and every family might have its own ideas of its "needs." A third definition was: "Poverty is the inability to satisfy minimum needs."

The Council of Economic Advisers, basing its estimates on "low-cost" food budgets compiled by the Social Security Administration, decided that the poverty "boundary line" was established by "a family whose annual money income from all sources was $3,000 (before taxes and expressed in 1962 prices)." Yet, on the very next page the Council report declared that in 1962 "5.4 million families, containing more than 17 million persons, had total incomes below $2,000." How could these 17 million persons exist and survive if they had so much less than

[1] Hartley Withers, *Poverty and Waste* (1914), p. 4.

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enough "to satisfy minimum needs"?

In a 50-page study published in 1965,[2] Rose D. Friedman subjected these Council estimates to a thorough analysis. Using precisely the same data and the same concept of "nutritive adequacy" as the Council, she found that the dividing line between the poor and the not-poor would be not $3,000, but a figure around $2,200 as the relevant income for a nonfarm family of four. Where the Council on the basis of its figure estimated that 20 per cent of all American families in 1962 were poor, Mrs. Friedman found that on her adjusted calculation only about 10 per cent were poor.

I must refer the interested reader to the full text of her study for the details of her excellent analysis, but two of her disclosures will be enough to illustrate the carelessness of the Council's own estimates.

One astonishing error by the Council was to use its $3,000 a year estimate as the "poverty boundary" for all families of any size. Mrs. Friedman's estimates ranged from $1,295 for 2-person households, to $2,195 for 4-person households, to $3,155 for households of seven persons or more. (The official "poverty line" estimates now also specify a similar range of differences for families of different sizes.)

A second error of the Council was equally astonishing. Based on a previous official estimate that a poor family of four needed about $1,000 a year in 1962 for adequate nutrition, the Council multiplied this amount arbitrarily by three to get what the family needed for all purposes. But it is notorious that pooorer families spend a larger proportion of their income on food than do richer families. Mrs. Friedman found that this multiple of three was much higher than the level at which three-fourths of the families concerned did get along on and still get an adequate diet. She found that the amount actually spent for food, on the average, by a family of four with an income of $2,200 was about $1,250 a year. In other words, the fraction of income spent on food at this level was about 60 per cent and not 33 per cent. Yet the official "poverty line" estimates, at this writing, are still kept unrealistically high by continuing to be implicitly based on this arbitrary multiple of three times adequate diet costs.

One of the great problems involved in arriving at any objective standard of poverty is the constantly changing concept of what

[2] *Poverty: Definition and Perspective.* American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C.

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constitutes "adequate" nutrition. This was once measured in calories. As time has gone on, and scientific research has continued, it has been insisted that adequacy also requires certain amounts of protein, calcium, iron, Vitamin A, thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, ascorbic acid, etc. The newest insistence has been on the need for a multitude of amino acids. Recently a nutrition survey done at Pennsylvania State College concluded that "only one person in a thousand escapes malnutrition!"[3] On this basis even affluence is no assurance of nutritional adequacy.

Yet compare this scientific ideal not only with the historic situation before the present century, when getting enough to eat was the major problem of the great majority of the populace of the world, but with the conditions that still prevail among that majority. Compared with a supposed subsistence minimum of 3,500 calories, half the people of the world today still get less than 2,250 calories per day, and live on a diet primarily of cereal in the form of millet, wheat, or rice. Another 20 per cent get less than 2,750 calories per person per day. Only the well-to-do three-tenths of the human race today get more than 2,750 calories as well as a varied diet which provides the calories that not only satisfy hunger but also maintain health.[4]

Official estimates of "poverty-threshold" income by Federal bureaus are still unrealistically high. I quote from a recent official bulletin:

"The decade of the sixties has witnessed a sizable reduction in the number of persons living in poverty. Since 1959, the first year for which data on poverty are available, there has been an average annual decline of 4.9 per cent in the number of poor persons. However, between 1969 and 1970, the number of poor persons increased by about 1.2 million, or 5.1 per cent. This is the first time that there has been a significant increase in the poverty population. In 1970, about 25.5 million persons, or 13 per cent of the population, were below the poverty level, according to the results of the Current Population Survey conducted in March, 1971 by the Bureau of the Census."

Yet though the estimate of the poor was then only 13 per cent of the population compared with about 20 per cent in 1962, the government statisticians were still using their old high estimate for

[3] Foundation for Nutrition and Stress Research. Redwood City, Calif. Bulletin No. 1, July, 1968.

[4] Rose D. Friedman. *op. cit.*, and M. K. Bennett. *The World's Food* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954).

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1962 – and writing up the dollar amount year by year to correspond with increases in the Consumer Price Index. The same bulletin quoted above informs us: "The poverty threshold for a nonfarm family of four was $3,968 in 1970 and $2,973 in 1959.[5] If Mrs. Friedman's more careful calculations had been used, the "poverty threshold" for a nonfarm family of four would have been closer to $2,900 than to $3,968 in 1970 and the percentage of "the poor" would have been closer to 7 per cent than to 12.6. In fact, an earlier bulletin of the Bureau of the Census,[6] which had estimated that "about 1 out of 10 families were poor in 1969, compared with about 1 out of 5 in 1959," informs us that if the Bureau's various "poverty thresholds" for families of different sizes were decreased to 75 per cent of its existing estimates (i.e., to approximately the levels suggested by Mrs. Friedman's calculations), then "the number of poor persons would drop by 40 per cent in 1969, and the poverty rate for persons would drop from 12 per cent to 7 per cent."

It is clear from all this that government bureaucrats can make the numbers and percentage of "the poor," and hence the dimensions of the problem of poverty, almost whatever they wish, simply by shifting the definition.

Changing the Answer

And some of our American bureaucrats have been doing just that. On December 20, 1970, for example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that, as of the spring of that year, it took a gross income of $12,134 to maintain a family of four on a "moderate" standard of living in the New York northeastern New Jersey area. The implication was that any family of four with a smaller income than that was less than "moderately" well off and presumably the taxpayers should be forced to do something about it.

Yet the *median* income of a typical American family[7] was estimated by the Bureau of the Census to be only $9,433 in 1969. This means that half of the number of American families were receiving less than that. Clearly a good deal less than half of American families were lucky enough to be re-

[5] May 7, 1971, U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Consumer Income*, Series P-60, No. 77.

[6] Series P-60, No. 76, December 16, 1970.

[7] Not necessarily a family of four. The term "family" as used by the Bureau for this calculation "refers to a group of two or more persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such persons are considered members of the same family." *Economic Report of the President*, February, 1971, Table C-20, p. 220.

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ceiving the "moderate" income of $12,134.

Most of those who try to frame a definition of poverty no doubt have in mind some practical purpose to be served by such a definition. The purpose of the Federal bureaucracy is to suggest that any income below its definition constitutes a problem requiring government relief, presumably by taxing the families who earn higher incomes to supplement or subsidize the lower. If the present official U. S. definitions of poverty were applied to a country like India, we would have to label as poverty-stricken the overwhelming majority of its population. But we do not have to go to India for such an example. If we go back only a little more than forty years ago in our own country, we find that in the so-called prosperous year 1929, more than half of the people in the United States would have been labeled "poor" if the "poverty-threshold" income since developed by the Council of Economic Advisers had then been applied. (This is based on statistical comparisons that fully allow for the changes in the price level in the meantime.)[8]

[8] Source: Jeanette M. Fitzwilliams, "Size Distribution of Income in 1962," *Survey of Current Business*, April, 1963, Table 3; Herman P. Miller, *Rich Man-Poor Man*, (New American Library, 1964), p. 47.

Let us look at one more example of the consequences of establishing an excessive or merely relative definition of poverty:

"The term poverty may connote hunger, but this is not what is usually meant in discussions about poverty in America. Consider, for example, the facilities available to the poor. Tunica County, Mississippi, is the poorest county in our poorest state. About eight out of every ten families in this county had incomes under $3,000 in 1960 [i.e., under the official "poverty-threshold" level] and most of them were poor by national standards; yet 52 per cent owned television sets, 46 per cent owned automobiles, and 37 per cent owned washing machines. These families might have been deprived of hope and poor in spirit, but their material possessions, though low by American standards, would be the envy of the majority of mankind today.[9]

Preserving the Incentive

To sum up: It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to frame a completely objective definition of poverty. Our conception of poverty necessarily involves a value-judgment. People in different ages, in different countries, in different

[9] Herman P. Miller, *Rich Man, Poor Man* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co. 1971), pp. 110-111.

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personal circumstances, will have different ideas of what constitutes poverty, depending on the range of conditions to which they themselves are accustomed. But while the conception of poverty will necessarily be to some extent relative and even individual, we should make every effort to keep it as objective as we can. Otherwise if, for example, our national income in real terms continues to rise as much in the next forty years as in the past forty years, our social reformers will tend to raise correspondingly their standard of what constitutes "poverty." And if this happens, the paradoxical result will be that the problem of poverty will seem to them to be getting larger all the time when it is really getting smaller all the time.

One writer has seriously suggested that we "define as poor any family with an income less than one-half that of the median family."[10] But on this definition, if the income of all groups increased more or less proportionately, as in the past, and by no matter what rate or what multiple, the percentage of "the poor" would never go down, while the implied absolute amount of relief required would keep soaring.

Our definition obviously should not be such as to make our problem perpetual and insoluble. We must avoid any definition that implies the need of a level of help or any method of help that would tempt the recipient to become permanently dependent on it, and undermine his incentives to self-support. This is likely to happen whenever we offer an able-bodied adult in charity or relief more than or even as much as he could earn by working. What he needs is a level of subsistence sufficient to maintain reasonable health and strength. This subsistence level must constitute our working definition of the poverty line. Any relief program that tries to provide more than this for idle able-bodied adults will in the end do more harm than good to the whole community.

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[10] Victor Fuchs, "Toward a Theory of Poverty," in U.S. Chamber of Commerce, *The Concept of Poverty*, Washington, D. C., 1965, p. 74.

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CRIME in America

DAVID WALTER

IT IS with considerable dismay that one notes the increasing incidence of criminal activities in the United States. After all, do not people living in the United States have the highest standard of living in the world and the most opportunity for advancement—thanks to the operation of the free enterprise system? Why, then, the increase in crime?

Many persons believe that fear of punishment has a direct effect on the rate of crime, and that leniency tends to encourage more crime; whereas others argue that harsh treatment by police or judges may drive the criminal to more brutal crimes in a desire to "get even" or "strike back at the oppressors."

Still others contend that crime is committed by those "kept poor by the system" and that welfare, not punishment, will stem the causes of crime. However, the record suggests to me that bribery or blackmail payments in the form of urban renewal, government handouts, and poverty programs unwittingly promote and become the justification for the commission of crimes. So, I believe we must examine further the basic causes of crime before prescribing more punishment as a solution.

The American tradition has been for the people to delegate to government the responsibility to combat crime through its police and judicial arms. Citizens supporting these government functions want a society of individuals content to leave their neighbors in peace. Police and courts are supposed to deal effectively with those few individuals who seek to obtain

Mr. Walter is a Cost Accountant in Philadelphia and editor of *Society for Individual Liberty News.*

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possessions from others by initiating force and denying rights of ownership.

Government Unbounded

If one is to understand the failure of government to check the crime wave, one must first recognize that government has taken to itself or been urged to assume many additional functions which are difficult to distinguish from outright criminal activity. Government, on all levels, is infringing upon the rights of individuals and taking their property by force. Government is increasingly seeking to control, without permission, those businessmen, entrepreneurs, and hard-working individuals who provide our high standard of living through the free market. If these same interventions were visited upon citizens by private persons, the actions would be clearly identified as crimes. But government, by "legalized" methods, now manages to deprive citizens of some 43 per cent of their own earnings. And many persons condone this system; they see the similarity of actions, but feel that coercion for "the right reasons" (to benefit the collective) is permissible while similar action for personal gain is not.

Those who believe in individual rights and the efficacy of the free market should understand why and how the government plunderbund encourages crime. The increasing attacks on private property – by criminals, governments, politicians, activist ministers, welfarists, students, and philosophers – indicate that respect for private property has been replaced or has diminished as a moral value among responsible people. This change in the basic attitude toward private property (which may be defined as the individual's life and all those things one has acquired to sustain it through voluntary transactions) explains the rise in crime. Otherwise, if more and more people were accepting the ideal of private property, surely the remaining criminals could not step up their activities sufficiently to raise the over-all level of crime.

The Looter Philosophy

Any society will have its principles reflected in its government, its mores, and its problems. It is not surprising to note an increase in crime in conjunction with an increased acceptance of collectivist principles of human action. For the widespread and popular acceptance of a looter philosophy is bound to bring forth a rash of looters.

Unfortunately for believers in liberty, many of the policies of government in the United States,

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as in other countries today, are based on the superiority of the group over the individual. We are told that the group (or the "public interest") demands subordination of individuals to the collective will. One might ask where these powers originate, since no individual holds such rights over another. But licensed philosophers of the new faith stand ready to answer that such powers spring like a will-o'-the-wisp from a sufficient grouping of individuals.

Government, under the collectivist philosophy, consists allegedly of the people who have superior insight into the everyday needs of the typical citizen. They decide how to distribute the nation's total output of goods among the masses for the common good. In America, this idea has been most dominant since the New Deal era, though it has governed to some extent every society previously known. Sorrowfully, today's debate concerns only how much to take, at what time, and for what purpose. Whether it is right and proper to take anything at all seems no longer to be questioned. A whole new generation has learned to turn these notions for their own benefit. Labor unions, pressure groups, looter groups such as the Welfare "Rights" Organization, political parties, and even business organizations and industrial concerns are all engaged in organized, sophisticated taking of other peoples' property. All this has come to be more or less accepted as part of the current political process.

Instant Justice

Nor are people entirely content to play according to the political rules. Why, they ask, should they wait for some greedy bureaucrat to get around to giving them the money "everyone" recognizes as having no rightful owner? Buffeted by government restrictions, or recipients of a poor public education, or unskilled and out of work due to minimum wage laws, or kept in a ghetto by urban renewal and building codes, these people decide to take "what is theirs by right" (or, at the very least, belongs to no one except he who can take it and hold it). So, cutting out the middleman, the thugs take to roaming the streets in search of loot and victims. They read about graft in public construction, war and pillage, inflation, labor union violence, and advice from the thought leaders about redistributing the wealth. Absorbing the society's predilections for violation of private property rights, they decide not to wait their turn in the political process because they have been waiting too long already.

Can the student who, in the

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morning, devotes his free period to working for a group which urges the workers to seize the factories complain when, in the evening, he is mugged as he leaves the campus? Can the labor union leader or the tariff advocate or the trust buster or the Presidential aspirant deny to criminals the "rights" they themselves demand to the livelihood of others? In a word, no. To be consistent with their own preachings, those who advocate to any degree a collectivist program have no right to complain about criminals trampling the rights of individuals. If they wonder why there are gangs roaming the streets, let them realize that those gangs are only doing what the collectivists piously demanded. The hoodlums do not wear dinner jackets nor do they speak from the podiums of great universities; they do not observe the niceties of "proper" political procedure or claim divine inspiration; they do not ask for the sanction of their victim; and they look upon politicians as fools who preach human liberty while doing everything in their power to enforce conformity and obedience to the welfare state.

Order, stability, and civilization (prerequisites of the free market) require far more than punishment, bribery, and blackmail in an attempt to gain good behavior. It is up to those who believe in private property and individual liberty to set an example for others by living what they preach. Each of us must root out from his own behavior those actions which run counter to voluntary trade among men. We must forswear any attempt to force others to our will. And, if we succeed with applying consistent principles of morality to our own lives, then perhaps others will be inspired to do likewise. Crime will decrease only to the extent that individuals begin to accept the principles of the free society where each man lives his life as he wishes, trades voluntarily with whom he pleases, and respects the right of other men to do the same.

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

A Risk Worth Taking

THE LIBERTY of going wrong is the seamy side of the priceless privilege of going right by free choice rather than by compulsion.

WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING, *The Coming World Civilization*

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WHAT ABOUT SIN?

PAUL L. POIROT

TO OUTLAW sin or to tax it, that seems to be the question. But the answer depends on one's definition of sin and his understanding of the nature and purpose of government. There are among honorable men vast differences of opinion as to what constitutes sin and what government can and should do about such things.

It seems reasonably clear and undebatable that what government can do about anything is to apply force, even if men may disagree as to whether a particular application of force is aggressive, or defensive, or of some other kind. In the final analysis, government is force.

From one point of view, the question is settled then and there: any resort to force is sinful by this view, and among the greatest of sins is a reliance on government for any purpose whatsoever; so, there should be no governmental agency to either outlaw sin or tax it. That's well and good for the saintly who have the character and courage absolutely to resist not evil – to turn the other cheek whatever the provocation. But it only confuses the issue and aggravates the problem for those who believe that force can and should be used in defense of life and property – to say nothing of those who would apply coercion for any other purposes they deem worthy.

For instance, I believe that the most practicable and desirable form of society is one that maximizes personal freedom of choice and minimizes violence among men. That is, I believe in a free market to facilitate voluntary association and trade. But I also believe that the optimum release of

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creative human energy – through voluntary association and trade – requires a framework of organized force or police power, a government of strictly limited scope and purpose to minimize violence among men, protecting the life and property of everyone who comes to trade in peace, permitting no person or group to block any peaceful trader from the market. Such a faith in a market economy is said by some to be a sin, and they would outlaw competition, or tax it, or both.

If faith in competition be a sin, surely it must be less deadly than mayhem and murder, lying, cheating, stealing, corrupting the lives and polluting or destroying the property of others. But the ranging of "sins" in order of their seriousness raises the interesting question of how or where to rank the love of money, the sin of pride, drinking, smoking, drug use, obesity, dancing, gambling, and an endless host of other questionable practices.

Are Innocent Persons Injured?

One approach to this problem of identifying sin and how to cope with it is to determine if the alleged sin does injury to the life or property of an innocent person behaving peacefully and self-responsibly. If so, should he not have full recourse under the law to recover damages sustained and to prevent further injurious action to himself and his property? And there probably should be governmental provisions for dealing with cases of child abuse, corruption of minors, and similar injurious actions against those considered to be incapable of caring for themselves – too immature or irresponsible to vote.

Respect for human life and belief in the dignity of the individual are by no means so universal and unanimous in the United States today as to preclude further debate. Note the sincere and vigorous differences of opinion on the matter of abortion, for instance, or on the methods involved in waging war in Vietnam. Yet, there would seem to be an overwhelming consensus against murder and other deliberate or careless acts of violence against the lives of innocent peaceful persons. Is there any reasonable doubt that killing and maiming others, deliberately or negligently and without due cause and provocation, is a punishable offense against man and society? Is there any reasonable objection to outlawing such antisocial actions and employing the full force of government to prevent and discourage such activities by individuals or groups against the lives of peaceful citizens?

It would seem equally proper to

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prevent and discourage acts of aggression against the property of any peaceful person. Yet, there is by no means the degree of unanimity of understanding and respect for private property in the United States as generally prevails in regard to human life. Considerably more educational effort is needed before it becomes universally clear that a man's honestly and peacefully acquired property is due the same respect from others as is his life itself; his property is but an extension of his life, his to use as he chooses so long as he chooses not to use it to the deliberate or negligent injury of other peaceful persons.

Which Attitude Toward Property?

The attitude toward private property may well be the key to the great puzzle over sin and what the government ought to do about it. If a man's property is viewed as something gained by injuring others, then it must seem just to retrieve it from the present owner (obviously, the rich) and redistribute it among those presumed to have been injured (obviously, the poor). But if one looks upon John Doe's property as that which others have freely given him, as outright gifts or for services rendered to them, the seizure and redistribution of such property would seem to be saying that services ought not be rendered according to the wishes of the customers, that no one should be free to own or buy or sell what he chooses. And the question boils down to this: Which attitude toward private property really reflects a respect for the life and dignity of the individual?

The logical answer would seem to call for the mutual respect and the common defense of private property, as acquired through peaceful productive effort and voluntary exchange. To shorten or diminish a man's life by stealing some or all of his property would seem to be the same kind of sin as maiming or killing him. But this, of course, is not the attitude or answer of those who advocate and condone the socialistic practice of taxing the rich for redistribution among the poor. It is the accumulation of property – saving really – that seems sinful to them; and the children of grace would be the deserving poor, no matter how well-deserved their poverty.

The Sin of Ignorance

We have been discussing actions injurious to the lives or property of innocent, peaceful persons, arguing that it is an appropriate function of government to protect the innocent and to prevent such criminal acts. But what about those sins of self-abuse that do not

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threaten or harm any innocent and peaceful person – drinking, smoking, gambling, and so on? What should government do about that kind of sin?

"That kind of sin" really boils down to the sin of ignorance – not knowing or caring that there are better ways to use one's faculties and other private property. And in the United States a decision was made a long time ago as to what the government ought to do about ignorance: compulsory education! Outlaw ignorance, and tax everybody to pay for government schooling! Had there been no early decision for compulsory education, one can imagine the problems that might otherwise have arisen to confront today's citizenry: widespread drinking, smoking, gambling, pornography, sexual promiscuity and perversion, irresponsible proliferation among the poor, slum conditions, looting and rioting, trespassing and destruction of property, disrespect for law, old people unable to care for themselves, masses of able-bodied men and women reduced to beggary, children roaming the streets dressed in rags and carrying guns and knives, moral and spiritual and intellectual and physical degradation on every hand, not to mention the waste and pollution of other scarce resources.

The harsh fact is that we have had an all-out government campaign against ignorance – and we do have all these other conditions, too – in the United States of America, in 1971. And the sober conclusion can no longer be escaped: perhaps the worst of the sins of ignorance is the belief that ignorance can and should be outlawed, that people can be forced to behave as if they were wise. If one finds his own ignorance intolerable, then he has already taken the first essential step toward correction. To the extent that he succeeds with his own problem, he will learn to tolerate what he had presumed to be ignorance in others, leaving to them the sweet and the bitter consequences of their own actions and the full responsibility for their own conduct.

Unless one is prepared to tolerate the ignorance of the poor – or the rich – and leave them to their just rewards, he can have no logical complaint against those who would seize his property for their own "better" purpose. As for the sins of ignorance, it is important not to outlaw them and not to tax them. But most important of all is not to subsidize them.

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W. MARSHALL CURTISS

RESTRICTIONS ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE | WHY DO THEY PERSIST??????

A businessman is always under the necessity of adjusting the conduct of his business to the institutional conditions of his country. In the long run he is, in his capacity as entrepreneur and capitalist, neither favored nor injured by tariffs or the absence of tariffs.

LUDWIG VON MISES, *Human Action*

IF THERE is one point of fairly general agreement among economists throughout the world and throughout time, it is that trade should remain free from all sorts of governmental restrictions and interventions. It would seem unnecessary to repeat over and over why the material welfare of individuals is enhanced through the division of labor and freedom to trade.

But restrictions still exist! Tariffs and other barriers to trade seem to move through cycles, relaxed at times, and then reapplied. Why, in the face of reasoned arguments by leading intellectuals, do restrictions to trade have such an appeal to lawmakers? In other words, who is it and what is it that moves the lawmakers to take such action?

The cry for protection comes in many voices. A glove manufacturer resents finding imported gloves in the market. It is natural for any firm to take any legal steps available to sustain profits and remain in business. If a way can be found to eliminate this foreign competition, perhaps convince the government to raise some sort of barrier to the foreign gloves — a tariff, or a quota, or an embargo

Dr. Curtiss is Executive Secretary of the Foundation for Economic Education. This essay is from the "Mises 90th Birthday Collection," copyright by The Institute for Humane Studies.

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– then the glovemaker might be able to continue in business, competing with domestic firms as always, but avoiding the foreign competitor.

The glove industry may maintain a lobby in Washington to try to convince the lawmakers that unless protection is provided, thousands of jobs will be lost, unemployment will rise, and companies will go bankrupt. And it may all be true! At least it often is convincing enough to the lawmakers.

What happened to the logical argument of the economists who said protection hurts the consumer? Well, the argument stands, but the consumer's voice is faint. What if it does cost a few pennies more to buy a pair of gloves? Compared with the loss of a job or a failing company, this is nothing! Or so it seems to those seeking protection.

We Accept Domestic Competition

Now, suppose a domestic firm is in financial trouble, in no way caused by imports. Does it send a lobby to Washington and ask for help? Not ordinarily. In domestic trade, we accept the idea that a firm must compete without special favors. True enough, companies do fail; men do lose their jobs; but the consumer is not penalized by interventions that reduce production and make things cost more.

If the failure of the *Edsel* automobile had been because of foreign competition, it might have been argued that a tariff on imports would have saved the car and preserved thousands of jobs. Had the maker been a one-product firm, it might have been saved from bankruptcy. But, no; it was a domestic firm that misjudged consumer acceptance of a product; and that was that! The *Edsel* is reported to have cost the Ford Motor Company $250 million.

A more recent example is that of *Corfam* which the du Pont Company developed to compete with natural leather for footwear. After seven years and a reported $100 million, du Pont discontinued production of *Corfam.*

Only the size of these write-offs makes these two items newsworthy. Thousands of new products are tried each year, and there are many failures. Unless a company has other profitable items which will carry such losses, the company may fail, as many do.

The testing of consumer preferences goes on constantly. Ordinarily, we wouldn't think of asking the government to prevent the failure of a given product. We accept such failure as one of the regulatory aspects of competition and the market. But let the competition be from a foreign country,

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even though it benefit consumers the same as domestic competition, and there arises a clamor to erect some sort of barrier to save jobs, or to save firms, or to build a fence around our high standard of living, or whatever.

Politics of International Trade

The justifications for tariffs and other forms of protection include the arguments that they keep our wages high, prevent unemployment, protect infant industries, help with national defense, prohibit trade with the enemy, discourage dumping, and so on.

Trade barriers or threats of trade barriers are often used in the formulation of foreign policy. "We will reduce our restrictions if you will do likewise." Or: "Let us reduce our restrictions against underdeveloped countries so that they can benefit from sales to us." Or: "Let us stop buying chrome from an African nation whose internal policies we do not approve." Among the reasons for trade restrictions must be included foreign policy. Or, as one author recently stated, "trade policy in the United States is a political matter."

But of all the pressures upon the members of Congress and the Executive to enact trade restrictions, few are greater than those exerted by business firms or associations representing business firms. Individual consumers who have the most to gain through the reduction or elimination of trade barriers, and who have voting power enough to elect or defeat any candidate for office, are practically powerless in comparison with business lobbies.

An as illustration, note the results of recent attempts to cut back certain phases of defense spending. Now, the production of something to be destroyed in combat obviously is worthless so far as contributing to the level of living of a people is concerned. If those workers and resources were used to produce housing, build highways, provide medical care, teaching, plumbing, auto repairs, and the like, then consumers would be that much better off.

But let it be suggested that we shut down our war machine and the protests are deafening. Workers will lose their jobs; companies will fail; the entire economy will suffer.

Granted, there are difficult adjustments to be made. But the fact that a worker is not needed in an airplane factory shouldn't preclude his finding a productive job elsewhere. One sympathizes with a worker in an industry that is being "wound down," especially in a one-industry community. In the recent discussion of continuing re-

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search and development of the SST, many in Congress, and many members of the press based their argument chiefly on the fact that thousands of workers would be disemployed and business firms would fail. The same arguments have been used in trying to maintain our outer space program. Such arguments have a strong emotional appeal and carry considerable persuasive force.

Many of the same arguments are used to establish trade restrictions, and with equally disastrous economic consequences.

Five Basic Principles

In discussing foreign trade, it is well to keep in mind certain basic principles:

(1) *Trade between two individuals, entered into freely, always results in benefits to both parties.* Otherwise, why should they trade? What anyone else may think of their judgment is beside the point.

(2) *There always is a comparative advantage in producing some products and importing others.* Production costs in one nation may be lower than in another nation for every item produced in either nation. But the people of these respective nations may still find it profitable to trade with one another.

It is often thought that only nations like Great Britain or other maritime nations benefit by trade, simply because there are so many things they do not produce domestically. True, the United States could close its borders to all imports and exports and still there might be a relatively high level of living for its citizens; but not as high as would be possible through trade with foreigners.

(3) *Consumption is the sole purpose of production.* Adam Smith explained this nearly 200 years ago. Production is to supply consumers' wants. It is not to make jobs, or to keep a business solvent, or to make one nation dependent on another. Naturally, some of these things happen as a by-product of production and trade, but that should not be the objective.

(4) *Trade ordinarily will be most satisfactory to all concerned when individuals or their agents who have something to trade deal with other individuals or their agents who want the other side of that trade.* Governments should be involved as little as possible; first, because they are not concerned, and secondly, because there is always the temptation to use the trade for purposes other than satisfying consumers.

If an individual in this country wanted to trade some of his own property for something offered by a Russian citizen, we would think little about it, knowing that each

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party to the trade considered he was better off than before. But if government enters one or both sides of such a trade, there is often the suspicion, sometimes justified, that one party is seeking a military or political advantage.

(5) *Imports require exports.* Foreign trade appears complicated because it often takes an indirect or roundabout route through several nations. In addition, monies of several nations with complex exchange rates are usually involved. But it finally boils down to the fact that a nation which imports must export something in exchange.

Many people appear to believe that we might eventually be inundated with imports to the extent that practically all production in this country, all jobs, all business firms, might be wiped out. They fail to see that foreign goods cannot continue to come into this country unless something goes out to pay for them.

The Reciprocity Argument

A popular argument in support of tariffs is that we will reduce our obstacles to trade if other nations will reduce theirs. In other words, we must do it together.

The lack of understanding of international trade and the effect of restrictions is reflected in this press release in *The New York Times* for March 31, 1971. "The European Economic Community decided today to give generalized trade preferences to developing countries beginning July 1." The implication is: "If you are poor, we will let you sell to us." The truth, of course, is that voluntary exchange, whether the participants be rich or poor, benefits the buyer as well as the seller. Had the "developing country" previously been subject to trade restrictions, then, of course, it would gain from the relaxation of those restrictions. But the increased trade also would be of benefit to the "affluent" buying nation.

When diplomats from different countries discuss the reduction of trade barriers, it almost always has the appearance of a high-level bargaining session. How little can we give up in reducing our restrictions on imports in order to gain some reduction in their restrictions against our exports? It never seems to occur to them that we stand to gain by opening our gates entirely, whatever the other nation does. Certainly our consumers would stand to benefit. But, always of diplomatic concern is the effect on firms and on jobs.

A great deal of consideration is given to "most favored nation" reductions. If we give one nation the "benefit" of our reduction, then all nations are entitled to this

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great benefaction. Actually, unilateral action in reducing our restrictions against imports would benefit our consumers, and might end most of the seemingly endless bargaining over reduction by other countries in return.

Who knows? It might soon be discovered that trade policy should not be a political issue but that free trade between citizens of all nations, rich and poor alike, benefits all consumers.

How Can Free Trade Be Achieved?

Politicians, in the legislative as well as the executive branches of government, respond to pressures of various kinds from their constitutents. So long as the pressure for trade restrictions exceeds that for free trade, we can expect restrictions to continue.

Considerable attention just now is directed at textiles, especially the textile trade with Japan. Had such trade been strictly between individuals without the intrusion of governments, many of our present problems would have been avoided. Following World War II, our government made concessions to help rebuild the Japanese economy. It delivered cotton for less than our own textile manufacturers had to pay for it; it practically gave new textile mills to the Japanese. Little wonder that American textile manufacturers resented this unfair competition and sought to restrict imports from Japan. Now, a quarter of a century after the war, while the effects of that kind of "foreign policy" may have worn off, the arguments against Japanese textiles persist and carry weight with legislators.

Over the years, many economic injustices, including misuse of capital and labor, have resulted from trade restrictions. To remove them all at once and go back to free trade is bound to require difficult adjustments on the part of business firms. No wonder they try, in any legal way they can, to protect any remaining shelters or even increase their protection.

Who Speaks for the Consumer?

From the standpoint of a manufacturer, the so-called benefits of protection and disadvantages of free trade are short-run and disappear once adjustments to the changed situation are made. The firm still must compete with other domestic firms as well as with imports, even if over a tariff wall. But it is these short-run adjustments that the legislators hear about – the layoff of workers, the reduced profits, and even business failures. The longer-run genuine benefits of free trade to consumers arouse little excitement. This is especially true in a country like the United States where imports

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are a relatively small part of all trade. Who is there to speak for the consumers? The professional protectors seem so interested in auto seat belts, unit pricing, packaging, advertising, truth-in-lending, and ecology that they aren't likely to get to the matter of free trade for some time.

Most families present a combination of consumer and producer interests, interests which may seem to be in conflict with regard to trade restrictions. For example, suppose two members of the family work in the local textile mill. The most important day-to-day problem to the family is making certain that these two mill workers are employed and bring home their weekly pay checks. So, if they are convinced that imported textiles may eliminate their jobs, then they are apt to be protectionists. Attesting to this is a story in a recent Sunday supplement headlined "Twilight of a Textile Town." In this article, it was reported that a mill which had been the town's leading industry for 70 years went bankrupt and put 844 textile workers out of work. Furthermore, "50 textile plants in the South have shut down since 1969. The Department of Labor has estimated that 27,200 Southern textile workers lost their jobs in 1970 alone."

This is a serious situation, apparently calling for a political solution. What is not so obvious is that even if all imports of textiles were stopped, after a short period of adjustment, domestic firms would find strong competition with each other and marginal firms would continue to face failure.

Adjusting to Change

An illustration of how adjustments can be made to a declining industry is related in the *New England Letter* for April, 1971, published by The First National Bank of Boston. The study shows how, in the early 1950's, many textile mills were liquidated and a basic weakness was shown in the leather and shoe industries. Some of the textile mills are now among those in trouble in the South. Had the problem been handled with political solutions, no doubt New England textiles could have been "protected" in a way that would have kept the mills going with employment and jobs as usual.

But, instead, New England industry changed, in part, to the manufacture of transportation equipment, electrical equipment, and instruments, to name only three. This new type of manufacturing is more export-oriented and enjoys a better international competitive position. It has the greater "comparative advantage" that economists have been talking

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about. It uses higher skills from its workers, and the "value added in manufacturing" is relatively high. Thus, in the long run, the return to labor stands to exceed what it was and what it might have been in the production of textiles, shoes, and leather goods. True, some of the newer types of industry have been closely tied to government defense contracts, and with a recent cutback, unemployment increased. However, a basis for export and for increased production for consumers is there.

Adjustments to changes like these are often difficult and must not be passed off lightly. But such changes in an expanding and progressive economy are always going on. Attempts to stop them with artificial restraints are certain to be more painful than is the process of adjusting.

Man Must Choose Between Freedom and Protectionism

As observed earlier, most economists agree that protectionism is unsound. The consumer is served best by allowing people to trade freely with each other, not only domestically but world wide. But restrictions continue to persist, placed there for political reasons. The incentive to erect barriers to trade is a political response to pressure from individuals, groups of workers, industrial groups, and others who think they will gain from protective measures such as tariffs, quotas, and the like.

Because the consumer is the disadvantaged party, it may be argued that the solution lies in his education. But as previously shown, the consumer's stake as consumer of a protected product often is much less important to him than his job as a producer of a potentially protected product. Therefore, it seems doubtful that consumers, as a group, can be effective in bringing political pressure on lawmakers to offset the pressure for protection exerted by other groups.

After two centuries and more of expounding the advantages of free trade, it must seem trite to say that education must be relied upon to bring about a correction of the wrongs caused by protectionism. Nevertheless, there seems to be no short cut. While the consumer, qua consumer, must be included among those educated, it would seem that emphasis should be placed on convincing lawmakers of the advantages of free trade so that they can better withstand the pressures put upon them by their constituents who think they need and deserve protection from competitors.

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To Abdicate or Not...

LEONARD E. READ

LIFE is a process of selection and rejection; knowing what to renounce in life and what to embrace are distinguishing marks of a wise man. My theme is Mises and his exemplary achievements in this respect – as much to be noted and honored as the economic enlightenment on which his fame so solidly rests.

Professor Ludwig von Mises arrived in America during 1940. My acquaintance with him began a year or two later when he addressed a luncheon meeting of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce of which I was General Manager. That evening he dined at my home with renowned economists, Dr. Benjamin M. Anderson and Professor Thomas Nixon Carver, and several businessmen such as W. C. Mullendore, all first-rate thinkers in political economy. What I would not give for a recording of that memorable discussion!

The final question was posed at midnight: "Professor Mises, I agree with you that we are headed for troublous times. Now, let us suppose you were the dictator of these United States. What would you do?"

Quick as a flash came the reply, *"I would abdicate!"* Here we have the renunciation side of wisdom: man knowing he should not lord it over his fellows and rejecting even the thought.

Few among us are wise enough to know how little we know. Ignorance of limitations is to be expected from everyone who does not see beyond himself. The wise man, on the other hand, achieves a measure of self-transcendence:

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he sees beyond himself, even beyond his environment. Knowing far more than the mill run of us, he measures his knowledge against what might be known and confesses to knowing nearly nothing. Such a rare individual weighs his finite knowledge on the scale of infinite truth, and his awareness of his limitations tells him never to lord it over others. Such a person would renounce any position of authoritarian rulership he might be proffered or, if accidentally finding himself in such a position, he would abdicate — forthwith!

Barriers to Creativity

Really, no one ever rules another. The most that is achieved by a Simon Legree, a Hitler, Stalin, or any of our own little dictators of economic affairs, is to keep others from being themselves. True, there is a role for a societal agency to play in keeping others from being themselves if it be their nature to commit theft, murder, deception, violence, and the like. I am not alluding, however, to the retarding of wrongdoing but, rather, to a person's freedom to be himself creatively. The authoritarian mentality is concerned not with inhibiting destructive actions but with the control and direction of creative actions. This no dictator can do; he can only suppress, deaden, destroy such actions. Creative actions can never be ruled *but only ruled out!*

The wise man, regardless of his superiority among men, realizes that his knowledge is but infinitesimal; that his light, however bright, is but a wee candle in the over-all luminosity; that were all others to be made precisely in his image, all would perish.

To illustrate the fractional nature of one's knowledge, sit behind the wheel of your automobile and ask yourself, what part have I had in the making of this remarkable gadget? The answer, be you the President of the United States or of General Motors, is that you have played very little part, if any. Ask next, what do I know how to do that might have played any part in the making of this machine? Your answer remains substantially the same. To my point: Last year several million automobiles were manufactured in the U.S.A. How come? From whence came the knowledge that does not exist, even incipiently, in any discrete human being? It had to come from somewhere.

The knowledge that makes the automobile possible exists in what I choose to call the over-all luminosity. This is composed of trillions times trillions of tiny illuminations, discoveries, inventions, insights, intuitive flashes, think-

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of-thats – an accumulation that had its beginning with the dawn of mankind. The cave man who discovered how to harness fire played his part. So did the Arab who invented the concept of zero. Without each of these, the automobile is inconceivable. These men, whoever they were, had as much a part as Charles Goodyear did in 1839 when he invented the hot vulcanization of rubber. Or those men who treated paper with a mixture of ferricyanide and ammonium ferric citrate and brought forth blueprint paper. Or those who found out how to make paper!

The over-all luminosity that makes possible our automobiles, stoves, pencils, and a million or so other things by which we live and thrive is handed down or, better yet, made available to us in countless ways: memory, teaching, books, tradition, folklore, to mention a few. It is a storehouse of unimaginable enormity; no individual can perceive a trillionth of it!

The wisdom in knowing that we know not is sometimes glimpsed in relation to things. For instance, it is easily demonstrable that no single person has the knowledge to make a simple pencil, let alone a jet plane or that fantastic windshield through which the pilot peers. Even so, the realm of things is pestered with know-it-alls, persons who seem unable to relate their tiny glimmers to the over-all luminosity and cannot therefore keep themselves in their place.

Where Angels Fear to Tread

However, it is when we move from the realm of things to the realm of humanity – man and society – that authoritarians proliferate. Even many who would confess to an ignorance of how to make a dynamo will, with no hesitancy whatsoever, boast of knowing how man and society should be made to perform. Failing to discern that men and their relationships are vastly more complex than any thing or things, they entertain no doubts about their competency to rule mankind.

In the realm of humanity, as in the realm of things, an over-all luminosity presides or rules. In social affairs, this may be referred to as "the consensus." Professor Hayek uses "Knowledge in society"; Edmund Burke called it "Immemorial heritage"; others refer to it as "Culture" or "Custom." By whatever name, it is a body of underlying assumptions, of ideas taken for granted and held more or less in common; it is the residual legatee of mankind's history or, as James Coolidge Carter phrased it, "the imperishable record of the wisdom of the illimitable past reaching back to the in-

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fancy of the race." It is what is handed down to us plus what we, who live on its growing edge, put into it.

Professor Mises knows that he does not or cannot rule; thus, he abdicates from even the idea of rulership. Knowing what phase of life to renounce is one side of wisdom.

But knowing what phase of life to embrace – to get ever deeper into, from which never to abdicate – is the other side of wisdom. And in this phase, as in the former, we have no exemplar who excels Mises.

This being my analysis, I shall use my own rather than Mises' phrasing: the ruling consensus, I repeat, is what is handed down to us, *plus what we put into it.*

What we put into it is the key. The improvement of the ruling consensus by you or me requires that our own thoughts and actions be, at the very least, a confirmation of the best that has been handed down to us or, hopefully, an improvement on what the consensus already contains.

We who live on its growing edge can put nothing into the consensus that is not within ourselves. It follows, if we would put anything into it, that life must be devoted to the improvement of what is within us, rather than wasted on the futile attempt to reform others.

I am unaware of any individual who is less the reformer or propagandist than Mises. To the contrary, his life is and always has been distinguished by a search for truth. His remarkable and unmatched economic works are testimony to many virtues but especially to his two-sided wisdom: knowing what phase of life to renounce and what phase of life to embrace.

There are numerous examples in history that lend credence to my prophecy. The seminal thinking of Mises – the improvements he has added to the consensus, manifested in his works over a span of seventy years – gives a light with so much radiance that it will penetrate the centuries – mirror itself through the ages.

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

On Power

POWER tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority.

LORD ACTON, in letter to Creighton, April 5, 1887

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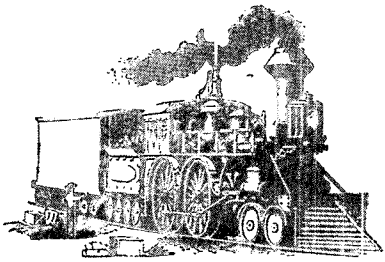

Throttling the Railroads

IF the United States were really a pragmatic country, believing that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, the fate of the railroads under the Interstate Commerce Commission would have caused an implacable uprising against government intervention in the marketplace. But, alas, we are ruled by ideologues who are put into office by romantics who do not believe in cause-and-effect relationships. So we plunge on from mistake to mistake. A possibly "saving remnant," however, is given to seeing through the hoax of our phony pragmatism, and among the most clear-sighted of this remnant is Clarence B. Carson, whose *Throttling the Railroads,* which ran serially in THE FREEMAN, has just been published by the Liberty Fund of Indianapolis, Indiana, for distribution by the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE).

As Dr. Carson sees it, our present railroad mess is entirely government-made and can only be compounded by the "cures" that invoke the "public corporation" sort of thing that will mean more government involvement in mass transit, "Amtrak," et cetera. The Federal government took the first really fateful steps in the eighteen eighties with the creation of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Before that there had been railroad subsidies, usually taking the form of gifts of land and government loans secured by first mortgages on railroad property. These resulted in premature building, but the results would not have been disastrous once bankruptcy had squeezed the water out of the more shaky enterprises. Subsidies

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are bad enough, but in our first flush of railroad building their main deleterious effect was to drain capital from areas that might have given U.S. citizens more satisfactions. Undoubtedly they led to depressions, but the depressions of the nineteenth century cured themselves. Permanent regulation is another matter, as Dr. Carson demonstrates beyond cavil.

Three-Way Intervention By Government

The "throttling" of the railroads by government, as Dr. Carson says, occurred in three main ways. Restrictive regulation took away "crucial managerial authority," which naturally weakened the power of the railroads to make sound competitive decisions. Secondly, after the government had withdrawn from its original program of subsidizing the rails, it turned to giving huge competitive favors to barge lines, the automobile, and the airplane. Thirdly, the government embarked on a policy of giving monopoly status to the railway unions. The "throttling" continues despite everything, as I know to my own personal cost as I ride the decrepit New Haven line (now part of the bankrupt Penn-Central system), to work on tracks that parallel the heavily subsidized New England Thruway over which the trucks roar in an unending stream.

The distinguishing thing about Dr. Carson's thinking is his unwillingness to accept even the most hallowed clichés. In the eighties and the nineties of the past century there was a tremendous outcry against such things as charging more for a short haul than for a long haul, or giving preferential rates to large shippers, or favoring some shipping points over others. These practices were condemned as "preferential," and the case was seemingly irrefutably established that "justice" required their abandonment.

Dr. Carson, however, says that the railroads were entirely justified in their supposedly discriminatory practices. A railroad usually has high fixed costs and low variable costs. To recover the fixed costs, it must be able to increase its income by taking advantage of the low variable costs. Otherwise it may not be able to remain in business to service the whole community of consumers. Since it costs a railroad less per ton mile to carry things over big distances than over small (most of the fixed costs are in loading and unloading), it can afford to charge less per-unit and per-distance for the long haul. Any other way of setting rates must make it difficult

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for people at a distance to get their goods to market at a low enough cost to compete with those producers who happen to be closer to where the customer lives.

Most of the allegedly nefarious practices of the nineteenth century railroad derived from the nature of competition, and the consumer actually benefited from them. The execrated rebate was a competitive cure for the monopolistic "pool." The "rate war," a "horror of competition," was in actuality a way of clearing the market, in no way different from bargain sales in the dry goods business. If something hadn't been allowed for the "long haul," growers of grains and vegetables who lived at immense distances from their markets would not have been able to carry their mortgages. When the long and short haul rules went into effect, it actually promoted a nonintegrated national rail system, for there was no incentive to link the long-haul western railroads with the short-haul eastern systems. A transcontinental railroad would have had to tie what had been profitable long haul rates to short haul rates in such a way either to incur great losses in the short haul business or to price itself out of long haul traffic.

The effect of the Interstate Commerce Commission regulation dampened the ingenuity and the desire of the railroads to find new ways of serving their customers. Made lethargic by the inevitable impact of government intervention, they were at a double disadvantage when forced to compete with the automobile and the airplane. The trucker had to pay gasoline taxes and user fees, but he did not have to invest in his right of way. The airplane had to load and unload like a railroad train; but the air, unlike the railroad bed, was free.

The unions put the finishing touches on the general railroad debacle. Protected by the government, they have been able to insist on their feather-bedding practices. The railroads have been frustrated in their attempts to substitute automation and the use of labor-saving technology in general for the "full crews" that were once needed when steam engines were in use. Dr. Carson tells about the height of absurdity that was reached when the unions insisted that crews of five men be hired to operate a one-man small auto delivery unit running on flanged wheels to carry passengers on a branch line.

Dr. Carson's recipe for unthrottling the railroads is simple: he would remove the dead hand of the ICC and the state regulatory commissions, he would take away

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special privileges from the unions, and he would stop subsidizing competitive modes of transportation. Unfortunately, governments don't abandon their interventions easily. A few more years of government-protected chaos, however, might convince us that our "pragmatism" just isn't pragmatic. How long, O Lord, how long?

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The following "extra" analysis of Dr. Carson's book is in no sense to imply an inadequacy in John Chamberlain's review. Rather, it is to afford the additional point of view of an "insider."

Mr. Canfield worked many years in the field of Industrial Traffic Management. He is now manager of the Commodity Code Group of the Uniform Classification Committee in Chicago.

▶ THROTTLING THE RAILROADS by Clarence B. Carson. (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y., Liberty Fund, for F.E.E., 1971. 143 pages. $4.00 cloth, $2.00 paperback).

Reviewed by Joseph M. Canfield

HUNDREDS of books have been written on the railroad problem. Dr. Carson's *Throttling the Railroads,* consisting of only 143 pages, is refreshing because it clears the air of a number of clichés. This is accomplished by rigidly applying the libertarian "yardstick" of nonintervention to the railroad situation. When this yardstick is used, most railroad students, especially true libertarians, have to acknowledge that their thinking has been inhibited by interventionist clichés.

In chapter four, Dr. Carson demolished the "right" of the community to "common carriage" and its other face, the "common carrier" obligation of the transportation company to serve all. Measured by the libertarian standard, this right-obligation should be relegated to limbo, along with that spurious "right to a free education."

Students in years past had drilled into them the development of the common law obligation of wharfingers, carters, innkeepers, and ferrymen to serve all. When these "rights" to common service – actually compulsory service – originated in medieval times, the free market economy wasn't allowed to function and compulsion was needed as motivation. To have this concept carried into an industrial society shows how hard it is to shake obsolete ideas.

The common carrier obligation has lost much of its meaning. It really isn't practical and cannot possibly be enforced. Most railroads are common carriers only to those who offer 6,000 pounds or more of freight at one time. Legally, most truck lines are common carriers, obligated to serve

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all the public. Practically, that doesn't mean a thing. For years, I was with one of the largest firms in the country. We were served by some regular truckers. But just try to get service from some common carrier we didn't regularly do business with or get someone to haul to a point that wasn't one of our regular destinations. Truckers would merrily decline their "common carrier" obligation, and there wasn't a thing the company could do. The truckers were completely practical and more realistic than the law.

And, of course, pipelines are common carriers; common to anyone who has a tank farm at each end of the line and can offer, say, 50,000 barrels of oil as one shipment. To use the same legal concept for a modern "big inch" pipeline as for a medieval boatman whose punt wasn't much longer than the pipeline's diameter, borders on the ludicrous. Our transportation system is shackled with such obsolete thinking.

Until I read Dr. Carson's book, I had always defended the railroad land grants. My reasons were, first, that they accelerated the transfer of land from government to private hands. Second, the railroads in return for the grants, carried government freight at 50 per cent of the commercial rates. The saving, up to the end of the concession in 1940, exceeded by many times the price of the lands so granted.

In chapter three, Dr. Carson shows that even in land grants government intervention is interference which is upsetting. The upsets spread like ripples in a pond. We rail men have been so impressed by the story of laying ten miles of track in a day during the building of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific, that we forgot our libertarian economics.

The effects of intervention spread somewhat in this order:

1. Railroads built without economic justification.
2. Government aid fostered corrupt practices in the railroads.
3. Farms were developed too soon and on poor soil.
4. The Indian problems were aggravated.
5. The buffalo was almost exterminated.
6. Agricultural prices were depressed.
7. Pressure for railroad regulation was accelerated.

And the dust bowl of the 1930's may even be a subsidiary effect.

But, say objectors, private capital would never have any incentive to build into undeveloped areas without government aid. Canadians tried to copy our method of supporting railroad extension. Their experience with the Canadian Pa-

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cific Railway made them think they could get away with that sort of thing. When the same methods were repeated in the early 1900's, the Grand Trunk and Canadian Northern Railways overbuilt and collapsed. As a result, there has been over 50 years of government spending in an effort to straighten out the mess.

Private capital did go into many areas in Africa, Asia, and South America and build railroads, sometimes aided by some degree of government support. The only broad study of these efforts, made in 1928 by ICC Commissioner Splawn,[1] makes the point that government action doesn't produce success in the absence of economic justification for building a railroad.

The willingness of American firms to pour money into railroads, such as the Quebec, North Shore and Labrador in recent years to reach iron ore deposits, confirms the libertarian doctrine that capital will move according to economic necessity. If there are no goods to move, the railroad won't be built.

The itch to get something from government, to use government to provide something beyond our means, has always been with us. Many New England towns, hot beds of "rugged individualism," used town funds to build branch railroads. These had no economic justification, but often were built for personal spite or town pride. This misuse of town funds contributed to the rot that brought about the collapse of the New Haven and the Boston and Maine, even though the day of reckoning was postponed for many years.

In my own studies of the trolley lines in the Midwest,[2] I found case after case where promoters whipped up enthusiasm for trolley lines that were completed only by the infusion of village or county funds collected from the taxpayers. The trolley cars had hardly started running before the officials yielded to another wave of enthusiasm and had the taxpayers pay for paved roads which destroyed the investment in the trolley lines. (The trolley is a form of transportation which can be a valuable tool, but one which has suffered from intervention more than any other transport medium – to the detriment of the community.)

In chapter six, a question we have often raised about railroad

[1] Walter M. W. Splawn, *Government Ownership and Operation of Railroads* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928).

[2] Joseph M. Canfield, *Electric Railroads of Northeastern Ohio* (1965); *West Penn Traction* (1968); *Badger Traction* (1969). All published by Central Electric Railfans Association, Chicago, Illinois 60690.

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mergers receives a likely answer. Why have there been no end-to-end mergers? Dr. Carson suggests that they would be more vulnerable to the restriction of the Long-and-Short Haul Clause of the Interstate Commerce Act (Fourth Section). This provision, pride of early regulators, is an American aberration which even the Victorian regulators of British railways never invented. Designed to protect one-railroad, intermediate towns (e.g., Tyrone, Pa.), it assumed that justice required that lineal miles take precedence over market requirements in rate making. End-to-end mergers would produce more situations where this restriction might apply.

Actually, it may cost *more* to serve an intermediate city, especially if it must be served by local freights which are operated under present work rules. The recent newspaper ad, showing the available work force of Tyrone offering themselves, suggests that even 80 years of protection by the long-short clause is of limited value in the face of economic reality.

Utilization of America's competitive railway network has resulted in wholesale exceptions to literal enforcement of the long-and-short-haul clause. So-called Fourth Section Relief orders granted by the ICC have been necessary to maintain a semblance of reality in the face of a legislative limitation. These orders must be published in the tariffs where they apply and add complication and expense. The tariffs are difficult to compile, publish, and interpret.

And make no mistake, rail and motor truck tariffs, required by the regulatory system, are complicated. Probably they are the most complicated publications receiving day-to-day widespread use. Having spent much of my working life interpreting tariffs, I found the mental gymnastics stimulating, particularly when I spotted the right rate on the first try. But the cost to railroads and shippers of wrong rates runs into millions of dollars annually.

Foes of deregulation fear that one result would be rates which would vary like stock market prices. Users of transportation want and negotiate for the lowest possible rates. However, most large shippers are now handling shipping documents through data processing systems where the cost of entering needless fluctuations of rates would be prohibitive. In today's picture we could expect negotiated rates without wild fluctuation.

Regulation, like all other forms of intervention, has failed to provide utopia. The interventionist mentality tries to blame everything and everybody for the con-

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tinuing problems. "Deregulation" proposals have been offered which would put ratemaking under anti-trust rules, an economic strait-jacket of the first order. A typical freight shipment represents one buyer, the shipper, dealing with many sellers, the various lines which handle the shipment. Collective ratemaking is the only realistic approach to be used in our national transportation system.

Dr. Carson's book is not a study in depth, but it is a study which adheres to the principles of freedom. All students of railroads and railroad problems should go back to work and review their conclusions in the light of the principles clearly laid down in *Throttling the Railroads*. More important, the whole country would gain if these principles could be applied to the present mess. Dr. Carson's message should receive the widest possible circulation.

▶ THE THEORY OF EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES by Albert J. Nock (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969) 160 pp., $6.50.

Reviewed by Dr. Jacques Barzun, University Professor at Columbia University.

ONE IS GLAD that he left these luminous pages in their pristine form of lectures (he begs indulgence for doing it), because that form shows him off at his best: full of charm, candid in his prejudices, elegant in diction, a natural ironist, and a man in whom thinking is clearly a familiar exercise.

I remember picking up the book soon after its appearance in 1932, at a little book shop on Broadway near 115th Street. I am afraid it was a remaindered copy, very cheap, like the novels of E. M. Forster and the two-volume set of Henry James's letters. It was my first acquaintance with Nock and I was delighted with my discovery.

I felt elated even after my incredulous irritation at what I found him saying on pp. 76-77. That is the passage where Nock, who throughout his lectures claims a connection with Columbia University, repeats some libelous nonsense about Columbia College, based on Abraham Flexner's then recent study of American and other universities.

According to both these unverifying men, it was possible to obtain a bachelor of arts degree in Columbia College by offering such subjects as advertising layout, practical poultry-raising, elementary stenography, wrestling and self-defense, and half a dozen other subvocational exertions. Nock recurs with relish to this list of depravities (including book-re-

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viewing) two or three times again in the later lectures. It is enough to make one doubt his common sense – or his familiarity with the educational scene of his own day.

As a graduate of Columbia College in 1927, who began teaching there that same year and for many more thereafter, I knew from inside knowledge that Nock's statement was a fantasy. The requirements for the degree permitted no such high-jinks as Nock alleged. What is worse, he goes on to say that by "some sort of traffic arrangement with a sister institution" the Columbia College undergraduate "may also count as leading to a degree, courses in . . . cookery, clothing decoration, dancing for men," and so on through a second half-dozen of domestic or social accomplishments. The fact is that permission to take any courses outside the Columbia College catalogue was extremely difficult to obtain. These enumerated frills (presumably from the Teachers College Home Economics department) would have been disallowed by the Columbia College dean, sitting with his Committee on Instruction.

The paradox is that if Nock had but known it, Columbia College in his day was the nearest approximation to the ideal set forth in his lectures. The curriculum did not require Latin and Greek, to be sure, but it turned its back on the free elective system and imposed strict requirements in history, mathematics, science, English, and modern foreign languages. The "majors" had to be approved so as to prevent a frivolous scattering of effort among elementary courses, and (as I said) there was no straying off the reservation into easy Extension or Teachers College courses. Arguing with friends from Yale, Princeton, and Harvard showed that they lived far more under the loose dispensation that Nock reprobated.

What was in fact his connection with Columbia? Research shows that from 1930 to 1932, he taught American History and Politics at St. Stephen's College, then a distant affiliate, later independent as Bard College. Reading his book suggests that Nock was there chiefly to bait President Butler, whose pronouncements he studied with the feral eye of a ruthless attorney. Nock, for example, is not above twisting one of Butler's phrases about the "new type of university organization." He makes it stand in a sinister way for the nonintellectual, nonformative subjects he castigated before. That is not what Butler was referring to, much less advocating. For Butler was a humanist, too, in his way as good a one as Nock.

And Nock, one must also add,

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was a little blinded by his just cause into forgetting some truths about the Great Tradition he praised and preached. His medieval universities were not as he represented them. Had he stopped to use his wonderful imagination, he could have inferred that the old Faculties of Law and Medicine were nothing but vocational schools – Medicine especially. And even Letters and Theology were largely dedicated to the "preparation for life" which he deprecates – making clerics and scribes and pedagogues. The Abelards and Occams are *always* rare and never the average. Universities are good enough when they permit them to thrive and collect disciples.

Nock was entirely right, of course, in his main thesis and his prophecy as well. We have been seeing the final degradation of the institution whose misdirected aim he denounced with such deadly urbanity. It would be good to have from him a section XV to add to the fourteen in his neat little book. It would be on Relevance and Social Consciousness in the Free Politicalized University. If I had a ouija-board, I'd spend a few evenings trying to take down the text of it from the authentic source.

Albert Jay Nock's book is back in print at $6.50, and may be ordered from The Nockian Society, 30 South Broadway, Irvington-on-Hudson, New York 10533.

▸ THE DECLINE OF RADICALISM: REFLECTIONS ON AMERICA TODAY, by Daniel Boorstin (New York: Random House), 141 pp., $4.95.

Reviewed by Robert M. Thornton

THE OLDER RADICALS had something to say; sometimes it was something that needed to be said, and occasionally they said it well. Not so the New Barbarians, as Professor Boorstin calls them, who may be found at all levels of society but especially among the overschooled.

Boorstin refers to "the conformity of dissent . . . . Dissent," he writes, "has tended to become the conformity of our most schooled classes. In those circles to say that the prevailing ways of the community are not 'evil' requires more courage than to run with the dissenting pack.

"The affirmations of differentness and feeling apart cannot hold a society together. In fact these tend to destroy the institutions which make fertile disagreement possible and fertile institutions decent. A sniper's bullet is an eloquent expression of dissent, of feeling apart. It does not express disagreement. It is formless, inarticulate, unproductive. A society of disagreers is a free and fertile and productive society. A society

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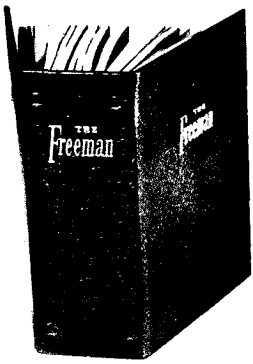
of dissenters is a chaos leading only to dissention."

The fragmentation of society worsens as it passes through the news media. "Since dissent is more dramatic and more newsworthy than agreement, media inevitably multiply and emphasize dissent. It is an easier job to make a news story of men who are fighting one another than it is to describe their peaceful living together."

People tend to act in terms of what they believe themselves to be, and the self-image of many is formed for them by what they see and read of vicious actions by a tiny fraction of the populace. Thus do newspapers and television, used in an unprincipled way, contribute to the emergence of the New Barbarians in our midst. "While they are not numerous anywhere – comprising perhaps less than 2 per cent of our two hundred million Americans – they pose a special threat precisely because they are diffuse, wild, and disorganized. They have no one or two headquarters to be surveyed, no one or two philosophies to be combated. But they are no less rude, wild, and uncivilized than if they had come from the land of the Visigoths or the Vandals. The fact that they come from within – and are somehow a product of – our society makes them terrifying, but it does not make them any the less barbarians."



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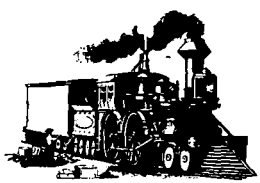

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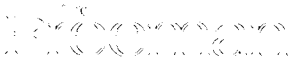

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